VICTORIA'S GUARDIAN ANGEL

A STUDY OF BARON STOCKMAR

PIERRE CRABITÈS

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BARON STOCKMAR
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VICTORIA'S GUARDIAN ANGEL

A STUDY OF BARON STOCKMAR

By

PIERRE CRABITÈS

NEW YORK

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"We confided *everything* to *Stockmar* and he was adored in this house."

Queen Victoria's Letters, Second Series, vol. I, p. 100.

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DEDICATED TO

HER HIGHNESS

MADAME EDOUARD DE HELLER

Princess Clémentine of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

INTRODUCTION

When I completed this work George V was still King of England and exercising an uncanny sway over the hearts of the entire English-speaking world. In preparing my manuscript I had been most forcibly struck by these lines in Stockmar's *Denkwurdigkeiten.**

"Let men like the late Lord Melbourne explain as they please that damned morality is sure to ruin everything", I, on the other hand, can testify before God, that the English machine "works smoothly and well only when the Sovereign is upright and truthful and that when he has been insincere, mendacious and wicked, it has creaked and fouled and jolted to within an ace of coming to a deadlock."

Knowing, as I did, that uncomplimentary explanations were given of the inability of the then Prince of Wales to sit a horse and aware, as I was, that tongues wagged about his private life, even if I refused to place the slightest credence in what I heard, I asked myself whether I should not stress the meaning of the Baron's words.

I came to the conclusion, however, that it was useless to do so, that they delivered their own message, and that any attempt to expatiate upon their

* Baron Stockmar's private diary.

significance would serve no useful purpose. I preferred to take it for granted that even if there might have been a modicum of truth in what I had heard, we could expect to see another King Henry evolve from another Prince Hal.

I put my manuscript in the mail and sent it to Messrs. George Routledge & Sons of London, who had published my first six books. I wrote them that I would call upon them in August (1936) to learn their decision. When I conferred with them Edward VIII had succeeded his father. Ugly rumors were afloat about his conduct. I hasten to add that they referred to his friends in general rather than to anybody in particular. I felt that, in the words of Grover Cleveland, I was confronted with a condition and not a theory, and that my pages would fail to do Stockmar justice if I refrained from emphasizing his remarkable prediction about the effect of the private life of the Sovereign upon the fate of the British Monarchy. But Messrs. George Routledge & Sons, for reasons which do them honor, refused to permit me to make any additions to my manuscript. To be perfectly frank, they evinced a reluctance to discuss the matter. I, accordingly, dropped the subject.

The situation has changed very much since August, 1936. Edward VIII is at present the Duke of Windsor and an exile. It is thus but fair to Stockmar's memory that his part in writing this momentous chapter of British history should now be seen in its true light, although I have not added a syllable to my text as originally written.

Even the most cursory reading of the Baron's *Denkwurdigkeiten* drives home the fact that he felt that Lord Melbourne had done the young Queen great harm in impressing upon her that one might be too strict in matters of propriety and in persuading her that "one ought to be indulgent towards other people's dreadful sins". Stockmar held that Victoria's immediate predecessors had been such reprobates that they had weakened "that strong feeling of loyalty which is peculiar to the English and which has distinguished them for centuries". He insisted that as "the exaltation of Royalty is possible only through the personal character of the Sovereign", Victoria and Albert should be paragons of virtue.

Dealing with a Queen who had a bad heredity, an indiscreet mother, a Prime Minister and confidant who was far too tolerant, Stockmar saw that he had to swing the pendulum to the extreme in order to carry his point. He thus hammered away at the fact that "the moral dignity" of the Court was the main support of the Crown. We may be certain that if his *Denkwurdigkeiten* stress these thoughts he brought them to the fore in private conversation whenever an opportunity presented itself.

The impression has been created upon me that the Baron was neither a prude nor a hypocrite, but that he fixed the line of conduct for which he fought so tenaciously because he considered it good politics. He felt that Englishmen are congenital hypocrites and that by burning incense to virtue a Sovereign

could win a place in their hearts. And he urged that any trifling with their sense of propriety would bring about disaster. I am inclined to believe that a reaction against the misconduct of the reigns of George III, George IV and William IV would have set in even if Stockmar had not put Victoria and Albert upon the proper path. But no mere surmise can blot out the fact that until he brought it to its senses, the Court had been drifting towards an insouciance pregnant with disagreeable complications.

The Baron is entitled to full credit for this accomplishment and particularly for having made a strong minded, self-centered woman perceive that if the people had any doubts about the rectitude of the private lives of the Sovereign the days of Monarchy were over. The fact that he based his advice entirely upon grounds of expediency, rather than upon principles of ethics, may displease some of my readers. It, however, to my mind, bespeaks the broadness of his statesmanship and does not necessarily impugn his character. He was bent upon accomplishing results. He spoke the language which was most suitable to his purpose.

Almost a hundred years have elapsed since he drove home his point. And so unmistakably did he do so that he has made it self-evident to me why Mr. Stanley Baldwin was constrained to force Edward VIII to abdicate.

PIERRE CRABITÉS

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PREFACE

MY complete manuscript was in the hands of my typist and sixteen out of my nineteen chapters had already been copied when my attention was called to Benson's *Queen Victoria.* I read two reviews which seemed to imply that this admirably written work had demolished the "Stockmar legend", and awaited with feelings of dread the arrival of a copy of the book.

Much as I envy Mr. Benson his style and greatly as I admire the brilliant picture he draws of Queen Victoria's reign, I fear he has failed to convince me that Stockmar's position has been the subject of any misconception, and make so bold as to send my manuscript to press without altering a word or adding a syllable.

Pride of authorship may perhaps have blinded me to the weakness of the case which I have espoused. My purpose, however, in referring to the matter is to allay any impression that I have deliberately set out to disprove what is, after all, only an incidental phase of a book of which I would be proud to be the author.

PIERRE CRABITÈS.

VICTORIA'S GUARDIAN ANGEL

CHAPTER I

THE DEATH OF PRINCESS CHARLOTTE

PRINCESS CHARLOTTE OF WALES died at two o'clock in the morning of 6 November 1817. Her death opened up to the younger sons of George III the prospect of succession to the Throne and gave them a motive for begetting legitimate offspring. Only two of the six surviving brothers of the Regent were then married—the Duke of York and the Duke of Cambridge. The Duke of Kent, who saw his path to the Throne blocked by his three seniors, the Regent, the Duke of York and the Duke of Clarence, summed up the situation in a conversation with Thomas Creevey :

" My opinion is the Regent will not attempt a divorce. I know persons in the Cabinet who will never consent to such a measure. Then, was he to attempt it, his conduct would be exposed to such recrimination as to make him unpopular, beyond all measure, throughout the country. No ; he will never attempt it. . . .

As for the Duke of York, at his time of life and that of the Duchess, all issue, of course, is out of the question. The Duke of Clarence, I have no doubt, will marry if he can ; but the terms he

asks from the Ministers are such as they can never comply with. Besides a settlement such as is proper for a Prince who married expressly for a succession to the Throne, the Duke of Clarence demands the payment of all his debts, which are very great, and a handsome provision for each of his ten natural children. These are terms that no Ministers can accede to."

After having brushed aside his three elder brothers, the Duke of Kent added :

"Should the Duke of Clarence not marry, the next Prince in succession is myself ; and although I trust I shall be at all times ready to obey any call my country may make upon me, God only knows the sacrifice it will be to make, whenever I shall think it my duty to become a married man. It is now seven-and-twenty years that Madame St. Laurent and I have lived together ; we are of the same age, and have been in all climates together ; and you may well imagine, Mr. Creevey, the pang it will occasion me to part with her."[1]

The Prince, who made this declaration of readiness to immolate himself upon the altar of duty provided his terms were met, was then fifty-one years of age, a tall, stately man of soldier-like bearing but already inclined to enormous corpulence. The crown of his head was bald and his hair was dyed, but he could still be described as a handsome man. He was extraordinarily fond of "patronizing and concerning himself in the

[1] *The Creevey Papers: A Selection from the Correspondence and Diaries of the late Thomas Creevey, M.P.*, edited by the Rt. Hon. Sir Herbert Maxwell (London, John Murray, 1903), vol I, p. 268.

affairs of others ".[1] He was, indeed, such a meddlesome person that he had no time to look after his own interests ; he did not even know that before his niece had died she and her husband, Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, had arranged that he should marry the widowed Princess of Leiningen, Leopold's sister.[2]

We cannot blame the Duke of Kent for being putty in the hands of Princess Charlotte. Men who dye their hair are often inordinately vain and conceited. They are so self-centred that they are unable to resist the wiles of match-making women. And in this case feminine guile was abetted by two male counsellors of unusual ability. Behind Kent's niece stood her consort, and supporting him was Dr. Christian Friedrich Stockmar, one of the subtlest minds of that day.

Both Stockmar and the Prince, who was only three years his senior, were natives of Saxe-Coburg. Stockmar was not an aristocrat. On the contrary, he was the son of " a lively, cheerful, humorous, kindly gentleman, highly educated, a lover of books and a scientific lawyer ",[3] later a *Justizamtmann.* His mother was " a clever, humorous woman, a lover of poetry and given to moralizing on human affairs ".[4] According to tradition the family de-

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten aus den Papieren des Freiherrn Christian Friedrich von Stockmar*, zusammengestellt von Ernst Freiherrn von Stockmar (Braunschweig : Druck und Verlag von Friedrich Vieweg und Sohn, 1872), p. 113.

[2] *Leopold I, Oracle politique de l'Europe*, par Comte C. Corti et Baron C. Buffin (Bruxelles : Librairie Albert Dewit, 1927), p. 52.

[3] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 1. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

scended from a Stockmar who had accompanied Gustavus Adolphus from Sweden to Saxony.

Prince Leopold was his father's eighth child. He inherited from a long line of ancestors, boundless ambition, a comely countenance, a well-made figure, a pleasing voice, a good constitution, an agile mind, adjustable political principles and a stout sword—but a relative scarcity of worldly goods. He accompanied the Allied Sovereigns when they visited London after the defeat of Napoleon, won the heart of Princess Charlotte, married her in May 1816 [1] and thus had every prospect of eventually becoming the Consort of the Queen of England.

Leopold, for some reason which is not quite clear, invited Stockmar to accompany him to England as his physician-in-ordinary. Their paths had crossed during the wars which had just ended. But why the Prince felt the need of importing a doctor into England is not explained.

After having attended the Coburg Gymnasium, Stockmar began his university career in 1805 and studied medicine until 1810 at Würzburg, Erlangen and Jena. His university years coincided with the most debasing period of French rule. He felt deeply the humiliation of his country, and blushed at the thought of the apparent inaptitude of his race to develop a sense of national patriotism. He dreamed of a Fatherland which would make

[1] "In May 1816 The Princess Charlotte married the man of her choice. He was Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg."—*The Greville Diary*, edited by Philip Whitewell Wilson (London : William Heinemann Ltd., 1927), vol. I, p. 104.

of Germans the dominant people on the Continent of Europe. He became politically minded before obtaining his medical certificate.

At the close of 1810 Stockmar returned to Coburg and began to practise medicine under the direction of an uncle. He seems to have shown considerable skill as a diagnostician ; but, like all Germans, he loved a uniform and two years later became what he calls " a town and country physician " and was put in charge of a military hospital at Coburg. In January 1814 he was assigned to the Saxon Ducal Contingent and accompanied it to the Rhine. He served as Staff Surgeon and impressed his personality upon Prince Leopold, who was then in the field opposing Napoleon.

Although it was not until 2 May 1816 that Princess Charlotte married Leopold, Stockmar was summoned to England on 11 March 1816. He landed at Dover on the 29th but, avoiding night travel " on account of highwaymen ",[1] did not reach London until the 31st. Even if he feared the English bandits, the country, the houses, and everything, especially in the neighbourhood of London, so delighted him that he kept on saying to himself " here one must be happy, here one cannot be ill ".[2]

It was at Claremont, a beautiful country place near Esher, sixteen miles from London, that the Royal couple established its residence. Stockmar's position at this Court was, at the beginning, a very humble one. His *Denkwürdigkeiten* record that " an insignificant German physician in England he was

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 14. [2] *Ibid.*

not even considered as their equal by all the members of the household, and even with the rest his intercourse was limited ".[1] In a letter home, he wrote: "Surrounded by the noise of the fashionable world I am solitary, often alone for days; my books are my society, my friends, my loves." [2]

Purely scientific occupations could not satisfy Stockmar's temperament, which had a bent for active life. His eyes were weak and his stomach did not take kindly to the English conception of cooking. He developed dyspepsia and suffered so much from what he calls ennui [3] that he became, to a certain extent, a hypochondriac. Princess Charlotte was able to sympathize with him, for she was "in a bad state of health—a fixed pain in her side, for which she wore a perpetual blister ".[4] She may, perhaps, have had appendicitis, but that since time-honoured ailment was not then catalogued. She seems to have taken it for granted that she and Stockmar were suffering from the same trouble—although she was pregnant and according to Creevey "is grown very large and is generally unwell ".[5]

Their ailments created a bond of sympathy between the Princess and the Doctor. The solid qualities of Stockmar's mind and heart won the confidence which interest in his dyspepsia had evoked. The cheerful, humorous side of his character helped in making their relations easy and pleasant and, in time, cordial. Little by little he

[1] *Denkwurdigkeiten*, p. 92. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*
[4] Creevey, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 264. [5] *Ibid.*

ceased to be looked upon as a mere German physician attached to the Princess's household and became known as her Consort's friend and secretary.

So adroit was Stockmar in stressing this evolution of his social position that when it was known that Princess Charlotte would soon become a mother he declined to act in a professional capacity. It may be, however, that he preferred to eclipse himself because he feared complications, for Creevey writes under date of September 1817, that "Pss. Charlotte is going on in her *grossesse*, but there are some strange awkward symptoms".[1] Be this as it may, Stockmar most diplomatically effaced himself and had no connection whatsoever with the case either at the crucial moment or during its preliminary stages.

On Monday, 3 November 1817, at seven o'clock in the evening, the first signs of the approaching birth of the Princess's heir showed themselves. On the 5th, towards noon, she was delivered of a fine large dead boy.[2] Artificial aid had not been employed. Immediately after the birth the Princess appeared to be quite well. She stood the news of the death of her baby with admirable fortitude. This state of apparent well-being lasted till midnight.

"Then Croft" (the obstetrician in charge), says Stockmar's *Denkwürdigkeiten*, "came to my bedside, took my hand, and said the Princess was dangerously ill, the Prince alone and I must go and inform him of the state of things. . . . She was in a state of

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 266.

[2] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 103.

great suffering. . . . Baillie said to her: 'Here comes an old friend of yours.' She stretched out her hand eagerly to me and pressed mine eagerly. . . . Baillie kept giving her wine constantly. She said to me: 'They have made me tipsy.' For about a quarter of an hour I went in and out of the room, then the rattle in the throat began. I had just left the room when she cried out loudly, 'Stocky! Stocky!' I went back. She was quieter, but the rattle continued. She turned more than once over on her face, threw her legs up and her hands grew cold. At two o'clock in the morning of 6 November 1817 . . . she was no more." [1]

The task of telling Leopold of the death of the Princess fell to Stockmar. The Prince could not believe that she was dead. The Doctor knelt by him. Then they went back to the chamber of death and prayed. When Leopold rose he pressed Stockmar to his breast and said: "I am now most desolate. Promise me always to stay with me." [2] Stockmar promised. Sometime later the Prince asked him: "Do you know what you have promised? Do you desire to be released from that promise?" Stockmar answered with an emphatic "No." And so was sealed a friendship between a Prince and "the most valued physician of his soul and body" [3] which knew no eclipse and which ended only when death parted them almost a half century later.

Like most widowers who are destined to remarry and to have not only many "affairs" but not a

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 104. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 105.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

few titular mistresses, Leopold's grief was very dramatic. At first, however, he shed no tears. As long as the Prince's sorrow found no outward expression Stockmar was much alarmed for his health. But when Leopold was "relieved by frequent tears and moans" [1] the Doctor knew that all was well and began to prescribe for him "morally and physically with tolerable success".[2]

One of his first prescriptions was not sent to the neighbouring chemist. It was a suggestion that they should respect Princess Charlotte's wish and hasten the marriage of the Duke of Kent to the widowed Princess Leiningen. This was the best available means of re-establishing the Coburg influence which had been so badly shattered by the untimely decree of fate.

It seems that the Duke of Kent, notwithstanding what he had said to Creevey, had been an unsuccessful candidate for the widow's hand.[3] As long as Princess Charlotte's youth appeared to block his accession to power she had refused to wed him, overburdened with debt as he was and involved in his liaison with Madame Saint Laurent. Now, however, that his chances of wielding the sceptre had become immeasurably brighter, Princess Leiningen looked at the matter from a different angle and appears to have been more than ready to listen to the arguments of Leopold and Stockmar.

The lottery ticket which the Coburg Princess bought in the shape of the Duke of Kent was

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 106. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Queen Victoria*, by Lytton Strachey (London: Chatto & Windus, 1924).

described by Greville, with Lord Melbourne's tacit concurrence, as "the greatest rascal that ever went unhung".[1] He was heavily in debt and because he and his brothers, the Duke of Clarence and the Duke of Cumberland, had "insulted—*personally* insulted—two-thirds of the gentlemen of England",[2] revenge had been taken upon them in the House of Commons, which had refused to help any of them out of their financial difficulties. He was such a martinet that the Duke of Wellington called him the Corporal.[3] His sisters did not like him and nicknamed him Joseph Surface.[4]

However dissolute and however intractable the Duke of Kent may have been, however deeply in debt, he had one quality which appealed to Leopold and Stockmar. His procreative powers offered a sporting chance that from his loins there might spring an heir to England's Throne. The marriage which meant so much to the higher politics of the Coburg family took place on 11 July 1818.

The Duke and Duchess could not afford to live in England, but they found adequate shelter under the roof of the Castle of Amorbach in Bavaria, belonging to the Leiningen princes. Stockmar's *Denkwürdigkeiten* tell us, however, that when it was found that there was a prospect of an heir it was the ardent desire of the Duke "that his child, in his eyes the future heir to the Throne, should be born in England. Financial considerations made the journey to England and the sojourn there appear

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 400.
[2] Creevey, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 277. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 285.
[4] *Ibid.*

difficult. In vain the brothers were appealed to, but at last friends came to his assistance. The Duke proceeded with his wife to England, in the spring of 1819, and shortly afterwards a pretty little princess, plump as a partridge, was born. He was delighted with his child, and liked to show her constantly to his companions and intimate friends, with the words 'Take care of her, for she will be the Queen of England.'" [1]

It is not said whether this appeal for funds to pay for the journey to England was addressed to Leopold or whether he spontaneously offered assistance. All that is known is that "in vain the brothers were appealed to, but at last friends came to his assistance". As a brother-in-law is usually an enigma and is, technically speaking, neither a brother nor a friend, we are groping in the dark. All that can safely be affirmed is that the Ducal couple did not return to the Continent when their "pretty little Princess, plump as a partridge" and christened Alexandrina Victoria was old enough to travel. "The Duke went with his family to the seaside at Sidmouth, in order, as he said, to cheat the winter." [2]

One day in January 1820 the Duke got wet and caught a cold. Pneumonia set in and soon assumed an alarming aspect. Stockmar, who seemed in those days to be predestined to be near when important events were about to happen in the English Royal family, was then at Sidmouth. Somebody expressed a desire that the dying man should make a will. Always prepared to help a Coburg,

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 113. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

Stockmar looked into the matter and, finding the Duke half delirious, " told the Duchess that human help could no longer avail, and that, with regard to the will, the only question was, whether it would be possible to so rouse the Duke to consciousness that the signature would have legal force ".[1]

The last flicker of the fast-fading candle of life gave the Duke the necessary light to understand the will when it was " read over to him twice. Gathering strength, he prepared to sign it. With difficulty he wrote ' Edward ' below it, looked attentively at each separate letter, and asked if the signature was clear and legible. Then he sank back exhausted on the pillows. The next morning all was over." [2] It was on 23 January 1820 that he died. His daughter whom he loved so fondly and who became Queen Victoria was then less than eight months old.

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 114. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 115.

CHAPTER II

THE KING OF THE BELGIANS

ALTHOUGH the Duke of Kent took great care over making his last will and testament, he had nothing but debts to bequeath. He left his widow in a most precarious position. She had three young children on her hands, a boy and a girl by her first marriage, and the baby Princess Victoria. Her jointure yielded her under £300. Her brother Leopold, however, came to her assistance with an allowance of £3,000 a year which enabled her to return to Kensington.[1]

Leopold's generosity may not have been entirely spontaneous. His heart may have urged him to the rescue of his sister, but he had another, less disinterested motive. There was a prospect that the baby in the cradle might eventually become Queen of England. The Prince and Stockmar, both of whom weighed things most carefully, could not permit the widowed Duchess to return to Amorbach with the infant who meant so much to the Coburg family. She was tempted to do so because she had learnt that the Duchess of Clarence

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria : A Selection from Her Majesty's Diaries, between the years* 1830 *and* 1840, edited by Viscount Esher (London : John Murray, 1920), vol. I, p. 17, and *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 115.

was again expecting a child and, what with this and with her husband's debts looming up like a mountain before her, she saw no reason why she should remain in a foreign country, among strangers whose language she could not speak and whose customs were a closed book to her.

The problem which was thus presented to the Prince and the Doctor, and which they solved by this settlement of £3,000 a year upon the Duchess, was only another phase of the same question which had arisen at the death of Princess Charlotte. Leopold then seriously contemplated living on the Continent in splendour on the annuity of £50,000 which the British taxpayers had bound themselves to allow him when he became the consort of the heiress presumptive to England's crown. It was Stockmar who persuaded him not to do this.[1]

The Doctor was but thirty years old when he took this decided stand against the Prince's return to Germany. He had already developed his genius for higher politics. He held that Leopold should keep in the limelight by spending the time of his mourning in England, "where the whole nation spontaneously, and as though it were a matter of conscience, mourned with him".[2] He argued if the Prince did not do this, it would be looked on in England as ingratitude and want of proper feeling.

Another consideration of major importance appealed to Stockmar. He stressed the fact that, though death had destroyed Leopold's prospects as

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 109.

[2] *Ibid.* See also Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 290.

the husband of the future Queen, it was the Prince's duty to maintain the position which he had founded in England and to make it the basis of his future life.[1] He boldly proclaimed that for a politically ambitious man there was no theatre of activity comparable to Great Britain, and advised Leopold that a well established and favourable position in England was the best springboard from which to jump higher.[2]

There was another factor on which Stockmar placed discreet insistence—that the Prince owed his financial independence entirely to the £50,000 which Parliament had settled upon him. It was suggested that if this money were not spent largely in England, the law officers of the Crown might be called upon by some champion of the fisc to inquire into the validity of continuing a grant which had been predicated upon conditions which no longer held good.[3]

The various points which had thus been impressed upon Leopold by Stockmar when Princess Charlotte died, had opened the Prince's eyes to the fact that his political ambitions were not necessarily buried in her tomb. And they had also taught him that it would be most imprudent for him to encourage anybody to ask Parliament at that time to make a settlement upon the Coburg baby begotten by the Duke of Kent. If any such proposal had been made it might easily have put it into somebody's head to protest against another Coburg receiving £50,000 a year.

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 110. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 110.

There were other reasons which may well have induced Stockmar to persuade Leopold to be generous with money that was really manna from Heaven. The Prince was then most unpopular. Greville writes that "he is very dull and heavy in his manner and seems overcome with the weight of his dignity".[1] And Creevey speaks of the King (George IV) having turned his back upon Leopold at a public reception "in the most pointed manner".[2] The first of these references is dated 24 December 1820 and the second 29 January 1821. They refer, therefore, to the period of the Duke's death, and show how unfortunate it would have been if any discussion had arisen about the munificent grant which the Prince was then enjoying.

In any case, Leopold entered Victoria's life in the favourable light of a generous uncle, and Stockmar became known to her as the intimate friend of her benefactor. She paid frequent visits to Claremont, which brought her closer and closer to the Prince and the Doctor. Much later she wrote to her half-sister, Princess Feodora in 1843, expressing what these visits had meant to her. Her letter appears to have been lost, but here is the reply:

"Many, many thanks, dearest Victoria, for your kind letter of the 7th from dear Claremont. Oh, I understand how you like being there. Claremont is a dear quiet place; to me also the recollection of the few pleasant days I spent during my youth.

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 290.
[2] Creevey, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 7.

I always left Claremont with tears for Kensington." [1] That the elder sister had not misinterpreted the Queen's letter is shown by what Victoria wrote her "dearest uncle" from Claremont on 10 January 1843. She said:

"I am happy to write to you again from this dear and comfortable old place. . . . This place has a peculiar charm for us both, and to me it brings back recollections of the *happiest* days of my otherwise dull childhood." [2]

In other words, the only happy days in Victoria's dark and dreary childhood were associated with Claremont—with Leopold and Stockmar.

Victoria loved Claremont in spite of the fact that on one occasion when there she was "very ill of dysentery, which illness increased to an alarming degree".[3] Stockmar did not act as her physician on this occasion, but his solicitude towards her won him a firm place in her affections. He had been "Stocky" to her cousin, Princess Charlotte; he now became "Stocky" to her.

In the years which followed 1820 Leopold's and Stockmar's interests were primarily concerned with the Prince's future. They made of Claremont a conning-tower from which they surveyed the world, and followed current events with their eyes focused on the possible effect that the trend of international

[1] *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's correspondence between the years* 1837 *and* 1861, edited by Arthur Christopher Benson and Viscount Esher (London: John Murray, 1911), vol. 1, p. 18.

[2] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 451. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

politics might have on the realization of Leopold's ambitions.

The two Germans were encouraged by the fact that early in 1821 the Duchess of Clarence's second child had died within three months of its birth. Great forces and fierce antagonisms seemed to be moving in their favour. Their interest in Princess Victoria was further stimulated in 1827, when it became quite probable that the new Queen would never again become a mother, and the hope of the Coburgs was then recognized as the heiress presumptive to the Throne of England. But Leopold was not satisfied with these prospects. He wanted something more. He aspired to grasp a sceptre—any sceptre—and, from some unspecified throne of his own, to rule Britain through his influence over his niece.

Having an annuity of £50,000, he had plenty of money to spend. He entertained lavishly, and maintained contact with all the political and social leaders of England. He was known to dominate the mother of Princess Victoria, England's heiress presumptive, and his favour was sought by everybody. Stockmar met all the prominent men and women who flocked to Claremont and thus established invaluable political relations with Whigs as well as with Tories. There does not seem to have been any national leader of prominence who was not his friend. He had one outstanding advantage over Leopold because he wanted nothing for himself.

Stockmar fitted in most comfortably with the political and social *élite* which frequented Claremont, not only because he was a well-informed

and courteous gentleman, but because he had the added prestige of having been created a Saxon Baron in 1821.[1] He had married in August 1821 his cousin Fanny Sommer of Coburg—a marriage which while removing him from the ranks of eligible bachelors may also have saved many worries. At all events, he was a married man who had certain of the privileges of celibacy, as he spent a great deal of his time in England and permitted his wife and family to remain in Germany.[2]

It was as early as 1825, and thus some two years before the battle of Navarino, that Leopold began to cast eyes at the Crown of Greece.[3] But it was not until 3 February 1830 that the Great Powers of Europe proclaimed "*qu'il y a une Grèce ; il reste à faire la Grèce*".[4] The Prince remarks in his *Reminiscences* that "Mr. Canning would not listen to these overtures, saying that Prince Leopold would be much more useful in England".[5] But Greville tells another tale asserting that "his intrigues about Greece were very despicable, plotting in all kinds

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 20. The patent of Saxon nobility given Stockmar in 1821 was followed by a Bavarian title in 1831 and by an Austrian in 1840.

[2] Stockmar had three children: Ernst, born 1823, the editor of his *Denkwürdigkeiten*; Marie, born 1827, wife of Professor Hettner, and Carb, born 1836.

[3] *The Early Years of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort*, by Lieut.-General the Hon. C. Grey (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1867), p. 393.

[4] *Histoire Diplomatique de la Grèce de* 1821 *à nos jours*, par Edouard Driault (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1925), vol. I, p. 464.

[5] *Early Years*, p. 393.

of underhand ways to get that miserable crown, without knowing what it was, and after he did know, when it turned out better than he ought to have expected at the time he wanted it, he backed out again ".[1]

It would seem, from the general tone of the *Denkwürdigkeiten* that Stockmar did not look with any great favour upon the acceptance of the inchoate Greek Crown, but he did not veto the proposal, feeling that after all it looked like being a King and that when Victoria came to the Throne it might be made into something really worth having. But by the time matters had, however, reached a point when *une Grèce* was about to become *la Grèce*, the astute Baron saw prospects of a Belgian sceptre. This brought about that change of policy at Claremont over which Greville was so sarcastic.

The dates in Greville's Diary make this quite clear. The extract just given is entered under 20 July 1831. Immediately following it the Diarist mentions that Leopold sought another " trumpery crown ",[2] and he adds :

" Lord Lansdowne told me that Leopold is inconceivably anxious to be King of Belgium, that short of going in direct opposition to the wishes and advice of the Royal Family and of the Government he would do anything to be beking'd, and, what is equally absurd, that the others cannot bear that he should be thus elevated." [3]

Stockmar played an important part in these

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 290. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 291.

Belgian negotiations. He was at Leopold's right hand at every move in the game. He saw with unerring judgment that, with England's backing, this candidature would succeed sooner or later. He insisted, however, that the Prince's reign would be a failure unless it were assured of England's unremitting friendship. He pointed out that to secure this friendship it was imperative that Leopold should renounce the annuity of £50,000 given him by the English taxpayer.

The man is not yet born of woman who would willingly give up such a sum of money. Moreover, as Stockmar admitted not only would the Dutch and possibly the French throw innumerable difficulties in Leopold's path, but England would not send troops to the Low Countries to fight the Prince's battle. But logic, tenacity and ambition finally carried the day and the Baron was sent to England to arrange matters.

The negotiations were somewhat tedious. Leopold was not at all infatuated with the idea of relinquishing his hold upon these £50,000 a year and only gave way to the plan proposed by Stockmar when he heard that a Tory peer, "Lord Londonderry was going to ask the House of Lords on the evening of 15 July (1831) what arrangements they had made with the Prince in regard to the continuance of the English apanage".[1]

Greville gives this summary of Stockmar's diplomatic manœuvring:

"Prince Leopold started on Saturday, having put his pension into trustees' hands . . . to keep

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 173.

up Claremont and pay his debts and pensions and then hand over the residue to the Exchequer, the odds being that none ever gets there and that he is back here before the debts are paid." [1]

What Stockmar wanted was to get Leopold's annuity removed from the sphere of English politics, so that when the Englishman read in his morning *Times* a reference to the King of the Belgians he would not turn to his wife and say "that King who costs us £50,000 a year is having himself talked about again to-day". Whether the Exchequer ever received a penny out of the arrangement is really beside the point. The relevant fact is that Stockmar did find a formula which accomplished the result he had in view.

The elimination of this stumbling-block permitted the Baron to return to the Continent and take up other phases of Leopold's new responsibilities. To go into details would entail writing a summary of the diplomatic history of Belgium, and our attention is primarily centred upon Stockmar's connection with the English Royal Family.

There was, however, one mission that Stockmar carried out for the King of the Belgians which is of special interest. He and Leopold wanted to get as many Coburgs seated on as many thrones as possible. They knew in 1835 that their Princess would soon be Queen of England. They determined to take advantage of the traditional friendship between London and Lisbon and have a Roman Catholic Coburg marry the Queen of Portugal. Queen Maria had become a widow on

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 291.

28 March 1835. The Baron was rushed to the banks of the Tagus as soon as decency permitted and on 6 December 1835 the necessary marriage contract was signed and the wedding ceremony performed on 9 April 1836.

It may not be amiss to quote from a letter which Lord Palmerston wrote Stockmar about this time. He said :

" Many thanks for your letter of the 9th (9 December 1835) which gives me your view of the bridegroom and the marriage.[1] Your account of the young Prince is sufficiently good. If he is tall and stoops a little it will be said that he is only *condescending* for the Portuguese generally are short and he will be considered as studiously *inclined* to *give ear* to his subjects." [2]

The importance of this letter to us does not reside in the insight that it affords of Palmerston's sense of humour. What appeals to us in it is the circumstance that it shows that as early as December 1835 Stockmar was upon a most friendly footing with one of the most insular of the English public men of that period. The fact that so uncompromisingly British a Foreign Minister as Palmerston was obviously somewhat intimate with the Baron creates a strong presumption that Stockmar's general personal and political contacts were exceptionally good and far reaching even at that early date.

[1] Palmerston confused the " marriage contract " with the marriage ceremony. The contract was signed 6 December 1835 and the marriage celebrated 9 April 1836.

[2] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 305.

It has already become clear that Leopold anxiously looked forward to the moment when his niece would become Queen of England. Nothing would have given him greater pleasure than to have spent as much time as possible at Kensington impressing his personality upon her. This was obviously impossible. He therefore did what he considered the next best thing He took advantage of the exceptional position that Stockmar had acquired in London to arrange with her that as soon as she attained her eighteenth year—or her majority—on 24 May 1837, the Baron should reside in England as her confidential adviser.[1]

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 315.

CHAPTER III

THE DUCHESS AND CONROY

A LETTER written by Victoria to Leopold dated 26 May 1837 said that she was delighted to hear that Stockmar had reached London and that she would see him at once.[1] Her journal entry of that day is quite laconic and does not refer to him. It is not until Sunday, 4 June, that he is mentioned :

"At a little after 3 came my good and honest friend, *Stockmar*,[2] and stayed with me until 1/2 p. 3. He had a very pleasant and useful conversation with me ; he is one of those few people who tell plain honest truth, don't flatter, give wholesome necessary advice and strive to do good and smooth all dissensions. He is Uncle Leopold's greatest and most confidential attached and disinterested friend, and I hope he is the same to me, at least I feel so towards him ; Lehzen being of course the *greatest* friend I have." [3]

This last phrase was not true, but it was obviously added because Baroness Lehzen had access to the Royal Diary. All that precedes shows that even if

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 69.

[2] The word is underlined, although other names in the same paragraph are not.

[3] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 193.

her governess had a special place in her affections, Stockmar, from the moment that he reached Victoria's side, enjoyed her unalloyed confidence and occupied a warm place in her heart.

We cannot but be impressed by the keen insight into human nature thus shown by a Princess of eighteen, even though she is described : " as moderately and indifferently equipped as the average girl of her age ".[1] The editor of her Diaries also says that there is nothing to show that, before Stockmar was instructed by Leopold to speak with due gravity upon important matters necessitated by her approaching accession to the Throne, she had ever talked seriously to any man or woman of exceptional gifts. Viscount Esher even says : " her mind at that time (when Stockmar was received in audience by her) was a blank page in so far as questions of high politics or of administration were concerned ".[2]

We do not intend to question the accuracy of this statement, advanced so dogmatically by an historian who was in a position to know the fundamental facts. But Lord Esher's view suggests that if the trials of Victoria's childhood together with the fact of her mother's infatuation for Sir John Conroy [3] may have interfered with her scholastic attainments, they schooled her in knowledge of human nature. They compelled her to live within herself. They taught her to give her confidence to Stockmar, not because he was a courtier but because " he is one of the few people who tell plain honest truth, don't

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 28.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 29. [3] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 403.

flatter, give wholesome necessary advice and strive to do good and smooth all dissensions".

The tribute to the Baron, compressed into these lines hidden away in a girl's confidential diary, shows that even when she was still in her teens, Victoria was worthy of wearing the crown. The statement has repeatedly been made that it was Lord Melbourne, her first Prime Minister, who initiated her into the art and science of statecraft. If Esher's statement be true that until she ascended the Throne her mind was a blank in so far as questions of high politics or administration were concerned, the conviction is thrust upon us that she must have been endowed with an intuitive sense of proportion and a precocity of judgment which are baffling in their worldly wisdom.

It is necessary to stress these qualities because it is the primary duty of a Sovereign to read the hearts of men and to penetrate into the souls of statesmen. Victoria's estimate of Stockmar shows that before she came under Melbourne's spell she understood that it behoved her to eschew flatterers and to give her confidence to those who told plain honest truth. It is a grave pity that her diary offers no details of that "very pleasant and useful conversation" the Baron had with her on 4 June 1837.

Let us pass from Victoria's Diaries to those of Greville. They give an insight into one of the problems which confronted the Baron. We have already seen that Leopold had sent Stockmar to England as soon as he had heard that William IV was dying. This was done in order that Stockmar

might be able to assist the Princess in her trying ordeal of taking over the reins of authority and because it had been decided that he should be near her as soon as she became of age. If Greville is to be believed, a preliminary stumbling-block presented itself which called for special ability in the art of "smoothing all dissensions".

It seems that the Duchess of Kent and Conroy, whose intimacy had shocked the Duke of Wellington,[1] were by no means willing that Victoria should reign in her own name immediately upon the death of William IV. They no doubt believed in the principle of *le mort saisit le vif*, but they appear to have sought to be the connecting-link between the dying King and his heiress apparent. They may perhaps not have sought to displace her *de jure* but, according to Greville, they schemed to eclipse her *de facto*.

Greville's facts are not set forth in chronological order but in what his editor calls "sinuous lucidity".[2] As we interpret them, they may be thus summarized:

During Victoria's minority a provisional regency by her mother had been legalized. The Duchess's ardent wish seems to have been that the King should hasten the realization of her ambition by an opportune death. The Earl of Durham, John George Lambton, known in Creevey's pages as "King Jog",[3] shared her hopes and set about paving the way to future Court favour through a

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 403. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 1.
[3] Creevey, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 32, and subsequent references to him.

strict alliance with her and Conroy. So maladroitly did he play his cards, however, that William IV only hated him, and looked upon him as being "Magnus Apollo to Princess Victoria's infatuated mother".[1]

This antipathy for Durham played a part in causing the King to pray during the night of 27/28 May 1837 that he might live till the Princess became of age. So ardently did he express this wish that "he was nearly dying just as the event arrived".[2] But he did not pass away. He became somewhat better as soon as this strain was removed from his heart.

But Greville affirms categorically that "to regain that control became their object".[3] In making this statement he does not refer specially to Durham but mentions the Duchess and Conroy by name. He goes on to replace "King Jog" in his picture by Princess Sophia, the fifth daughter of King George III, asserting that her house was a convenient rendezvous. He adds this piquant detail.

"For several years she was very much in the intimacy of Conroy, and it is supposed the Duchess of Kent used to meet him there. This connection (which was carried on secretly) set the Queen very much against her, and she resented it so much that she never took any notice of her aunt, except making her a formal visit once a year."[4]

It seems, always according to our interpretation of Greville's diary, that the Duchess and Conroy,

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 7. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 8.
[3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

aided and abetted by Princess Sophia and Durham, when confronted by the fact that Victoria's majority was approaching, spread the rumour that the Princess was not sufficiently developed mentally to be fit to reign. Sir Robert Peel, who was then out of office but whose patriotism was ever on the alert, sought to meet this insidious attack by stressing the point that it was very desirable that Victoria should appear as much emancipated as possible from all restraint and exhibit a capacity for the exercise of high functions.

Philip Whitwell Wilson, the editor of Greville's diary, feels called upon to supplement the paucity of facts dealing with what went on behind the scenes when the King was dying, by adding this striking remark :

" Sir Robert Peel's suggestion that the young Queen on ascending the throne should be ' emancipated from all restraint ' is significant. There was evidently a fear lest Victoria should be less than a free agent." [1]

It may be objected that Peel feared not that the young Queen would be brushed aside by the Duchess and Conroy, the Princess and Durham, but that Melbourne would make a puppet of her. It seems almost impossible to believe that a regency could have been contemplated after King William's prayer had been answered during the night of 27/28 May 1837, and he had lived to see his heiress attain the age of eighteen. But ambitious women and scheming men, heartless mothers and vindictive aunts, sometimes do irrational things.

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 7.

The conditions existing during those crucial days are brought out by these excerpts from Greville's diary :

"At the prospect of Queen Victoria's accession the public in general don't seem to care much and only wonders what will happen. Nothing will happen, because, in this country, nothing ever does." [1] And again,

"Of Cinderella in Kensington Palace, little was known.

16 June 1837. What renders speculation so easy, and events uncertain, is the absolute ignorance of everybody, without exception, of the character, disposition and capacity of the Princess. She has been kept in such jealous seclusion by her mother (never having slept out of her bedroom, nor been alone with anybody but herself and Baroness Lehzen) that not one of her acquaintances, none of the attendants at Kensington, not even the Duchess of Northumberland, her governess, have any idea what she is, or what she promises to be. It is, therefore, no difficult matter to form and utter conjecture which nobody can contradict or gainsay but by conjectures equally uncertain and fallacious." [2]

It is clear, then, that whatever Peel may have implied by his remark, the situation was sufficiently involved to be pregnant with all kinds of possibilities. If Greville may be believed, the true story only came out many years later. He may not be telling the truth, one hesitates to judge, but he puts his cards, face up, upon the table. One can

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 6. [2] *Ibid.*

read their message and form one's own opinion of his sincerity. His diary runs :

" It was Lord Granville who told Greville, years later, what had been afoot. He had seen that faithful servant of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Baron Stockmar. And referring to the Duchess of Kent and Conroy, the Baron had said :

London, 30 October 1854. Their objects were to get a regency established for a couple of years on the pretext of the Queen's youth and inexperience and to force her to give a promise in writing that she would make him (Conroy) her private secretary. Conroy urged the Duchess to shut her up, and keep her under duress till she had extorted this engagement from her, but the spirit of the daughter and the timidity of the mother prevented this plot taking effect." [1]

Not content with giving these circumstantial details and with citing the authority of Lord Granville, whom he describes ninety-four pages later as " quite imbecile ",[2] Greville adds relish to his tale by bringing Melbourne into it. He seems to be determined to emulate the modern journalist, some of whose most sensational items are often aptly described as " important if true ", for he goes on to say that :

" The regency scheme was attempted through Melbourne himself, and it seems (what I did not know before) that he was in the first instance disposed to make up to Conroy, and Duncannon [3]

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 8. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

[3] The name Duncannon not Durham (see page 28) appears in this Diary entry.

was eternally closeted with him, particularly during the weeks or months preceding the death of King William: they evidently thought their political interests would be best consulted by a union with Conroy." [1]

However colourful all this may be, it is not quite as startling as the statement that:

"Shortly after the death of the King, the Duchess wrote to Melbourne and told him that it was her daughter's wish, and she was authorized to tell him so, that he would bring in a bill to establish a regency for a short time." [2]

So far, Greville has said nothing about what Stockmar did when all this intrigue was going on. Leopold had sent the Baron to England so that he could keep his eyes and ears open and to do whatever Victoria's interests demanded. The *Denkwürdigkeiten* throws no light whatsoever on this matter. But this silence means nothing. Stockmar was the very personification of discretion. And, besides, his son and editor points out that in weaving together the fragments from his father's note-book and correspondence he has not published all the available material. "My father", he said, "was content to remain half-hidden before the eyes of posterity. Faithful to his spirit, this book lifts the veil but little."

Greville was not at all discreet. On the contrary, he took infinite pleasure in telling a good story. He delighted in adding to the details we have already given:

"Stockmar, who appears by some means to

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 8. [2] *Ibid.*

have been acquainted with everything that passed, spoke to Melbourne about it (the regency plot), denounced Conroy and assured Melbourne that this demand of regency was made at the instigation of Conroy and without the knowledge or consent of the Princess. And he, at the same time, complained of the *commérage* continually going on between Duncannon and Conroy. Melbourne was struck all of a heap at this intelligence and at once promised that neither he nor anyone connected with him would have anything more to say to Conroy." [1]

It is most unlikely that Stockmar would have acquainted Victoria with all that he may have heard about the activities of the Duchess and Conroy and of the Princess and Durham, not to mention Duncannon. But Victoria's reference to the Baron's ability to "smooth all dissensions", tends to show that Stockmar must have told her enough to let her know that he had succeeded in pouring oil on some troubled waters, and that he had not hesitated to speak "the plain honest truth".

A measure of confirmation of Greville's reliability as a chronicler is found in Victoria's indictment of him. The publication of his diary, with some of its choicest morsels deleted, aroused her wrath. Her horror surpassed the resources of language. She attacked him most savagely. She accused him of many derelictions but she did not say that he lied. Her fulminations were put in the form of a letter addressed to Mr. Theodore Martin and dated 26 October 1874. They read :

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 9.

"What *does* he (Mr. Martin) *say* to the *dreadful indiscretion* and DISGRACEFULLY *bad taste* of Mr. REEVE in publishing Mr. C. Greville's scurrilous journal, without eliminating what is very offensive and most disloyal towards the Sovereigns he served, and towards the Sovereigns and Princes whose hospitality and even intimacy he enjoyed ? . . .

The Queen is determined that, on some occasion or other, she will make known *what she* knows of his character. Of George IV, too, he speaks in such shocking language ; really language not fit for any gentleman to use of any other gentleman or human being, still less of his Sovereign." [1]

If Victoria, who thus promised to wreak vengeance upon Reeve's head for his publication of Greville's "scurrilous journal, without eliminating what is very offensive and most disloyal towards the Sovereigns he served", does not accuse the diarist of untruthfulness or exaggeration but solely of disloyalty and bad taste, all that is said in "such shocking language" about the machinations of the Duchess and Conroy, and of the Princess and Durham assumes a probative value that merits consideration. It implies that it was Stockmar, not Melbourne, who took the young Queen by the hand and first guided her youthful steps.

If Victoria excoriated Greville for his indiscretion and his disloyalty, while refraining from attacking the accuracy of his facts or his truthfulness, his

[1] *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, Second Series, edited by George Earle Buckle (London : John Murray, 1926), vol. II, p. 354. (*The Letters* show the same typographical feature brought out in the text.)

diary gives a succinct appreciation of what took place and shows that his bad manners did not necessarily adversely affect either his accuracy or his judgment. He thus summarizes the situation under an entry made on 13 January 1842, that is to say at a time when he could contemplate matters in retrospect but before Lord Granville had given him the details which he sets forth under the date of 30 October, 1854:

"Strictly regarded, the proposal of Conroy to hold Victoria's person under duress and the letter of the Duchess of Kent, wrongfully claiming Victoria's authority, was high treason. And in dealing with Conroy, Queen Victoria, though no more than a girl of eighteen, displayed an immediate initiative, as decisive as the axe of the Tudors." [1]

If Greville's diary records that "the regency scheme was attempted through Melbourne himself", it is only just to Melbourne's memory to recall that before Victoria came to the throne he had no reason to know of her outstanding ability. The responsibility of office made it his duty to safeguard the interests of the nation.

If, as Greville himself asserts and as we have already seen, Victoria had "been kept in such jealous seclusion by her mother . . . that not one of her acquaintances . . . have any idea of what she is, or what she promises to be", and if her mother and Conroy, her aunt and Durham, insisted that she was mentally undeveloped, it was incumbent upon the Prime Minister to contemplate a regency. He had no alternative. He had

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 9.

to think of his country. He was justified, both as a gentleman and as a patriot, in giving due weight to such statements in regard to Victoria's intellectual development as may have been made to him by or in the name of her nearest relatives.

Melbourne and Stockmar were friends. It has already been seen that the Baron was well known to the statesmen who ruled England during the days of George IV and of William IV. They had implicit faith in his honour and in his discernment. Melbourne believed in him, as Victoria's own words clearly show. She wrote in 1867:

"Lord Melbourne had the greatest regard and affection for, and the most unbounded confidence in him (Stockmar). At the commencement of the Queen's reign the Baron was of invaluable assistance to Lord Melbourne." [1]

This "note by the Queen" was made many years after the date when the misguided ambition of her mother and the ill-advised activity of her aunt were jeopardizing her interests. Madame de Sévigné said somewhere that "you either know a person's within half an hour after meeting him or you never get to know him". So perspicacious a politician as Melbourne had summed up Stockmar long before the reign of William IV was drawing to an end.

It is thus demonstrable that while the false representations of Conroy may have made Melbourne hesitate—or rather made it incumbent upon him to hesitate—Stockmar's intimate knowledge of Victoria's attainments brought a new

[1] *Early Years*, p. 188 (note by the Queen).

factor into play. He was able to go to the Prime Minister, look him straight in the eye and tell him the truth. He had known the Princess intimately practically all her life. He was in a position to give Melbourne the assurances about the heiress apparent which the hot-house-plant mode of existence that her mother had imposed upon her had made it impossible for the nation's responsible executive to obtain elsewhere.

The note has already been quoted which Victoria drafted and which said that " at the commencement of the Queen's reign the Baron was of invaluable assistance to Lord Melbourne ". In the light of the facts brought out by " Mr. C. Greville's scurrilous journal ", and which were not generally known when this attestation was given, it may well be amended to read : " before the Queen's accession and at the commencement of her reign the Baron was of invaluable assistance to Lord Melbourne ".

CHAPTER IV

QUEEN VICTORIA'S ACCESSION

MELBOURNE'S impeccable correctness in the discharge of his official duties accounts for the fact that his name does not appear, except incidentally, in Victoria's Diaries until after the death of William IV. But no official restraint interfered with Stockmar's access to her. It has already been seen that on Sunday, 4 June 1837, she received in audience her "good and honest friend Stockmar". Affairs of the greatest moment occupied his entire attention during the succeeding days.

Not until Saturday, 17 June, is his name again mentioned in the Royal journal. It appears in this form:

"The news of the King are worse again to-day. Wrote my journal, etc. Arranged some prints, etc. At a little after 2 came Baron Stockmar and stayed till near 3. The news of the poor King were *very* bad! Drew. At 1/4 to 5 we drove out with Mary, Lehzen and dear little Edward, who was very funny and amusing. We came home at 6." [1]

Stockmar was received in audience the next day, but for how long is not stated. Nothing is said about him in the entry made on 19 June, although it mentions that "the poor King was *so* ill that he

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 195.

could hardly live through the day" and ends with these words: "Stayed up till a 1/4 p. 10. Read in W. Scott's life while my hair was undoing."[1]

On the following morning at six o'clock, the mother who had been so cruel to Victoria and who would willingly have deprived her of her birthright, while insisting upon sharing her room, awoke her and told her that the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Conyngham were in an ante-room and wished to see her.

The tale has often been told of how they were ushered in, how in a few minutes the door opened and in came Victoria, alone, wrapped in a dressing-gown with slippers on her naked feet, and how, when in a few words Conyngham told her of their errand, as soon as he had uttered the words "Your Majesty", she instantly put out her hand to him, intimating that he was to kiss hands before he proceeded. Everybody knows that he dropped on one knee, kissed her hand, and going on to tell her of the death of the late King was followed by the Archbishop, who kissed her hand and then addressed to her a sort of pastoral charge, which she received graciously and then retired.

It is, however, not so generally known, or, at all events, not appreciated in its true light, that immediately after having dismissed the two Lords from her presence and having retired to her room and dressed, the Queen summoned Stockmar. Her journal entry of 20 June 1837 makes this quite clear.

She there describes her reception of the Archbishop and the Lord Chamberlain, and adds that

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 195.

after their departure, "I then went to my room and dressed". She then passes on to the statement that:

"Since it has pleased Providence to place me in this station, I shall do my utmost to fulfil my duty to my country; I am very young and perhaps in many, though not in all things, inexperienced, but I am sure, that very few have more real goodwill and more real desire to do what is fit and right than I have,"[1] and at once notes:

"Breakfasted, during which time good faithful Stockmar came and talked to me. Wrote a letter to dear Uncle Leopold and a few words to dear Feodora. Received a letter from Lord Melbourne, in which he said he would wait upon me at a little before 9."[2]

It must have been one of the most epoch-making breakfasts known to history. Victoria had received the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Conyngham *alone*. The fact that she had been permitted—or had dared—to walk into her sitting-room *alone* at six o'clock on that memorable morning had made such an impression on her mind that the words *alone* and *Queen* are the only ones she underscored in her description of her accession. The inference may be drawn from the general context of her diary entry that she was also *alone* when she "breakfasted, during which time good faithful Stockmar came and talked" to her.

Stockmar was too able a man not to have taken full advantage of the opportunity which being *alone* with the eighteen-year-old Sovereign before

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 196. [2] *Ibid.*

anybody else had had access to her ear offered him. He had rendered her inestimable service by having forestalled the plot. She may not then have known the inner details of all that he had already accomplished for her, she may not have realized the magnitude of the peril that he had averted, but her instinct had told her all that he was to her.

Stockmar was "Uncle Leopold's greatest and most confidential attached and disinterested friend". The journal entry shows that the Baron used the incomparable opportunity afforded him by having Victoria write "dear Uncle Leopold" before she received Melbourne's letter that the Prime Minister would wait upon her "a little before 9".

When Melbourne was received in audience Victoria told him that it had long been her intention to retain him and the rest of the present Ministry at the head of affairs. He came again at about eleven. Half an hour later a Privy Council was held in the red saloon. The Queen's two uncles, the Dukes of Cumberland and Sussex, were then admitted to the royal presence. Afterwards some of the Lords of the Council were received. These items are followed by the short but significative notation: "saw Stockmar".[1]

The afternoon was crowded. When it was over Victoria made these entries in her diary:

"Wrote my journal. Took my dinner upstairs alone. Went downstairs. Saw Stockmar. At about 20 minutes to 9 came Lord Melbourne and remained till near 10. I had a very important and a very *comfortable* conversation with him. Each time I

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 198.

see him I feel more confidence in him ; I find him very kind in his manner too. Saw Stockmar. Went down and said good-night to Mamma, etc. My *dear* Lehzen will ALWAYS remain with me as my friend, but will take no situation about me, and I think she is right." [1–2]

So Victoria saw Stockmar at four different times on the day of her accession. Each audience was at a strategic moment. Emphasis has already been placed upon the significance of the first. The second was in the middle of the afternoon. The third took place just after dinner and immediately before Melbourne's reception. The last followed it and brought the business of the day to a close.

If the events of 20 June 1837 be analysed it becomes obvious that they are dominated by the mandate given Melbourne and by Victoria's statement at nightfall that she had a *comfortable* conversation with him, feeling more confidence in him " each time " she saw him. " The voice *is* Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau ", for it may be well to recall that the " ever faithful uncle and friend Leopold R." " had advised his dearest child " that " the great thing would be to make no change, to keep Ministers and everything as it is, and to gain time ". It is for this reason that if Viscount Esher writes that :

" From the Queen's accession to the day of her marriage the table-talk of Lord Melbourne fills the largest place in her journals," [3] he precedes this remark by the statement :

[1] *Ibid.* [2] Whenever italics or roman capitals are used in these pages it is because the original text does so.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

"It was noticed, whenever she (Victoria) was asked to decide some difficult matter, her customary reply was that she would think it over and give her answer on the morrow. Onlookers, knowing that she relied on the advice of Lord Melbourne, generally asumed that she referred to him in the interval. He, however, declared that to many of his questions a similar reply was given. In point of fact, she was obeying one of the precepts of her uncle, the King of the Belgians." [1]

Leopold had given this advice on at least two occasions. He first referred to the matter on 23 June 1837, rather tactlessly by suggesting that before Victoria decided on anything important he would be glad if she would first consult him. He hastily added that this would have the advantage of gaining valuable time for her. [2]

When the thoughtful Uncle returned to the charge four days later, he was far more adroit. He eliminated his personality from consideration, confining himself to laying down the general principle that whenever a question is of some importance, it should not be decided on the date when it is submitted. He added that "it is really not doing oneself justice *de décider des questions sur le pouce*. And even when in my mind I am disposed to accede, still I always keep the papers with me some little time before I return them." [3]

But, however much he might insist, as he did in his letter of 29 July 1837, that "my happiness and greatest pride will always be, to be a *tender and*

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 32.
[2] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 79. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

devoted father to you, my beloved child, and to watch over you and stand by you with *heart* and *soul as long* as the heart which *loves* you so sincerely will beat ",[1] Leopold could not forget that fate had dealt cruelly with him when the death of Princess Charlotte had prevented him from becoming the uncrowned King of England. He had hoped to rule at Windsor as the Consort of Britain's Queen. He determined to make his influence felt from Brussels as her uncle.

Leopold was unconscious of the fact that he was seeking to make a political pawn of his niece. A man who could unblushingly proclaim that " the Established Church I also recommend strongly; you cannot, without *pledging* yourself to anything *particular*, *say too much on the subject* ", and who also underlined the words to emphasize his meaning, was obviously so confirmed an egoist that he did not know the meaning of the word disinterestedness. Nothing was too sacred not to be used by him for his own ends.

Leopold's suggestion that before Victoria decided on anything important she should consult him, foretells that sooner or later his officiousness—if not his selfishness—would force him to unmask. One does not know when, exactly " the devoted and grateful niece and affectionate child " [2] first learnt that " her faithfully attached Uncle and Friend " [3] was not entirely disinterested. It is clear, however, from the correspondence exchanged by them and from the Queen's journal, that by June 1838 she knew the truth.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 87. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 80. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

The King's letters, at about that time, were full of foreign politics. He commented upon the situation in Spain and Portugal and animadverted on the character of Louis Philippe. He did not hide the fact that, in his manœuvrings with France and Holland, it was most desirable that he should have, or appear to have, the support of England. He interpolated this paragraph into what he wrote on 2 June 1838:

"All I want from your kind Majesty is, that you will *occasionally* express to your Ministers, and to good Lord Melbourne, that, as far as is *compatible* with the interests of *your own* dominions, you do *not* wish that your Government should take the *lead* in such measures as might in a short time bring about the *destruction* of this country (Belgium) as well as that of your uncle and his family."

There is perhaps a patronizing ring about the references to "your kind Majesty" and "good Lord Melbourne"; indeed, about this entire excerpt. And no woman will tolerate being patronized. No doubt Leopold thought that his letter was a model of draftsmanship, the acme of diplomacy. He was grotesquely mistaken. He had struck absolutely the wrong chord. Victoria's diary entry of Wednesday, 6 June 1838, makes this very clear. It reads:

"I showed him (Melbourne) the letter from Uncle Leopold which I got yesterday, and in which he touches upon these unhappy Affairs, wishing *me* to prevent my Government from taking the lead in these Affairs, etc., etc.; and saying his

position is *des plus embarrassantes*. Lord Melbourne read it over with great attention, and then spoke of it all most *kindly* and sensibly. . . . I told him what Uncle had said of Stockmar to Van de Weyer, and that Stockmar said he did not fear all this, and was sure that Uncle would give way in a little time." [1]

The point which is of special interest to this narrative is that while Leopold was endeavouring to use his ascendancy over his niece, in order to strengthen his position and extend his influence, Stockmar remained steadfast in his loyalty to Victoria. There was remarkably little selfishness, self-interest or egoism in him. Even Palmerston, whose conception of *civis Britannicus sum* almost prevented him from seeing any good in any foreigner, said of the Baron that "he was the most disinterested man he had ever encountered." [2]

With Stockmar's support and Melbourne's approval, Victoria, after waiting a week, because "it is really not doing oneself justice *de décider des questions sur le pouce*", sent her "dearest uncle" quite a long letter which spoke of "feelings of warm and devoted attachment" and of "great affection" and which, while giving assurances that "nothing can ever change them", let him know, not in so many words, but between the lines, that although she was "his most devoted and affectionate niece" [3] she was, nevertheless, first and foremost Queen of England.

So bent was Leopold upon dictating the foreign

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 344.
[2] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 26. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 117.

policy of Victoria's government that he refused to take the broad hint which this letter conveyed. Some months later he again became insistent. He seemed determined to come to England and to try to impose his views by the weight of personal argument. The Queen's diary shows that an appeal was made to Stockmar to put "the loving uncle" in his proper place. It is recorded on 7 August 1838 that:

"Lord Melbourne said he had also seen Lord Palmerston, who had spoken to him about these Belgian Affairs, which they still hoped, in spite of many difficulties to settle. . . . I expressed a fear of the Belgians resisting. Lord Melbourne said (which is quite true) that it would be awkward if Uncle Leopold came over just in the midst of these conferences. . . . Lord Melbourne had best send for Stockmar and get him to settle it with the King." [1]

The Queen's journal contains no entries from Tuesday, 7 August 1838, to the following Sunday, 12 August. It is manifest that the Prime Minister fully concurred in the Royal suggestion and that he saw the Baron during the intervening four days. No time was lost and Stockmar rushed to Brussels in order to let Leopold know what he had refused to understand when the realities of life were so courteously brought to his attention between the lines of that letter addressed to him on 10 June 1838. "Saw Stockmar for a little while", runs the memorandum made on 12 August "and then took leave of this good and kind friend, which I

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 379.

am really sorry to do. He told me that he had been to see Lord Melbourne, and he said I should have (which I have *always* had) the greatest confidence in Lord Melbourne, and ask his advice not only in Political Matters, but in domestic affairs—and ask his advice just like a *Father*, which are quite my feelings." [1]

The close relations existing between the Queen, Melbourne and Stockmar at the time when Leopold was thus informed that he would not be permitted to dictate the foreign policy of his niece's government are further brought out by this contemporaneous note made by Victoria :

" Before I say another word I must not omit to mention that I wrote a letter to Stockmar begging him to mention to Lord Melbourne my anxious wish to give him the *Blue Ribbon* (which I offered to him, through Stockmar, last year immediately upon my accession and which he refused in the most notable manner), as I said I felt I owed him so much. . . . Stockmar told me this morning he had shown Lord Melbourne my letter and that Lord Melbourne would speak to me on the subject." [2]

Victoria, during her entire reign, watched her Honours List with a jealous eye. She was constrained to yield to political exigencies and to give decorations which obviously reflected party affiliations. But in such matters she never effaced her personality. The circumstance that Stockmar played such a prominent part in the tender of the *Blue Ribbon* to Melbourne, when Leopold was

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 380. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 353.

making his self-interest transparently apparent, serves to bring out most clearly how firmly, even at that critical moment, the Baron was entrenched in her goodwill and esteem.

When all these facts are carefully sifted and weighed they mean that when Viscount Esher asserts that Victoria was "in point of fact, obeying one of the precepts of her uncle, the King of the Belgians", when she refused to decide difficult matters on the spot and replied that "she would think it over and give her answer on the morrow", it would have been more accurate had he said that "she was obeying one of the precepts of her uncle, the King of the Belgians", as interpreted and approved by Stockmar. It was his brain, not Leopold's, that made its influence felt from the eve of her accession. She did not realize it at first, but it was the interpreter, not the author of these messages from Brussels, who was her spiritual mentor.

There can be no doubt that Stockmar was consulted repeatedly when matters were taken under advisement by Victoria. The Queen's journal records, on 21 June 1837, the day after her accession, that "at 2 came Stockmar till after 3".[1] 23 June has these three entries: (1) "Saw good Stockmar, who remained in my room for some time";[2] (2) "I wrote a letter to the Marchioness of Tavistock while Stockmar was here, asking her to become one of the Ladies of my Bedchamber";[3] and, finally, (3) "after 7 we all dined. I had a

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 200.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 201. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 202.

GREAT deal of business to do after dinner. Saw Stockmar. . . . Stayed up till after 10." [1]

If one considers what an important part this question of the choice of the ladies of the Queen's Bedchamber played in the early days of Victoria's reign and how badly Melbourne bungled the matter during Stockmar's absence, one is impressed with the uncanny foresight shown by the Baron in remaining at the Sovereign's side while she wrote to the Earl of Harrington's daughter, the Marchioness of Tavistock, tendering her the post. There is no way of telling what the business was which was so important that three lines were drawn in the Queen's diary under the adjective "great". But Stockmar's name is the only one mentioned. She does not say he was present at the conference. One is left with the impression that he was not actually there, but that she reported its results to him after it had adjourned, took counsel of him and was guided by his advice.

In the journal entries of the succeeding days, the traditional "saw Stockmar" repeatedly occurs. It gives way on 2 July 1837 to the less laconic:

"At a little before 4 came Stockmar and stayed till a little before 5. He is a most honest, excellent, disinterested and straightforward man, and most exceedingly attached and devoted to me; he has been, and is, of the greatest use to me." [2]

The next day the Queen received "good Stockmar for some time".[3] On 13 July 1837 she gave this personal touch to one of her references to the Baron:

[1] *Ibid.* [2] *Ibid.*, p. 207. [3] *Ibid.*

"I always saw Lord Melbourne and also Stockmar in my Private Sitting-room (the first of the three), but all the other Ministers, etc., etc., I saw in the further room (the farthest of the three). Did various things. Saw Stockmar for some time." [1]

No doubt Victoria sensed that this bracketing of the names of Melbourne and Stockmar might arouse the curiosity of "dearest Uncle" Leopold. She evidently attached importance to the circumstance that she received them in her private sitting-room (the first of the three), whereas all the other Ministers were assigned to the further room (the farthest of the three). But she knew what the King thought of the Baron and this final paragraph was accordingly added to a letter, dated 11 July 1837 addressed to "my dearest, best Uncle":

"I have very pleasant large dinners every day. I invite my Premier generally once a week to dinner as I think it right to show publicly that I esteem him and have confidence in him, as he has behaved so well. Stockmar is of this opinion and is his great admirer." [2]

Victoria was essentially a woman. Partisanship was, therefore, imbedded in her very nature. She unhesitatingly admits that during the early days of her reign she was actuated by a strong party bias.[3] She frankly confesses, practically over her own signature and with a sincerity that does her honour, that up to the time of her marriage she had indulged in strong factional advocacy.[4] She

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 211.
[2] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 85.
[3] *Early Years*, p. 276.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 327.

perhaps imagined that in receiving Melbourne in her private sitting-room when all the other Ministers were forced to content themselves with the further room she was stressing her support of Melbourne. At all events Stockmar's name was so potent that it was invoked to justify the public evidence of the esteem in which the Premier was held.

CHAPTER V

MELBOURNE

IT is a proof of Melbourne's breadth of vision that he had the greatest regard and affection for and the most unbounded confidence in Stockmar. This statement is made on the authority of the Queen herself.[1] Nevertheless, he and the Baron did not always see eye to eye. The Prime Minister was a party man. Though essentially conciliatory and not swayed by violent political passion, his tendency to follow the line of least resistance was so pronounced that he readily gave in to the wishes of his supporters when they brought pressure to bear upon him. His favourite dictum in public life was "why not leave it alone?" The philosophy compressed into these words probably caused him to put no break upon Victoria's spirit of partisanship when her youthful enthusiasm made an ardent Whig of her.

Melbourne was in his fifty-eighth year when the Queen ascended the throne. He was temperamentally indolent and incorrigibly careless. He was lacking in initiative and wanting in firmness. He craved feminine society. His relations with women gave opportunity for criticism though not open scandal. Circumstances made him over-

[1] *Early Years*, p. 186 (note by the Queen).

night the confidential constitutional counsellor of a young Sovereign, who fell so precipitately under the influence of his charm that on the fifth day after her advent to power she wrote her "beloved Uncle":

"How fortunate I am to have at the head of the Government a man like Melbourne. I have seen him now every day, with the exception of Friday, and the more I see him, the more confidence I have in him; he is not only a clever statesman and an honest man, but a good and kind-hearted man, whose aim is to do his duty for his country and not for a *party*." [1]

At all events, even though there may have been no malice aforethought in the line of conduct followed by Melbourne, it is generally admitted that instead of impressing upon his illustrious ward the great principle that she was Queen of the entire people and that it was her duty to hold herself free from entangling alliances with any party, he contributed by venial sins, partly of omission, partly of commission, to creating a condition which caused the nation to look upon her as being only the Queen of the Whigs and more particularly of the Melbourne wing of that faction. He did more than that. He committed the egregious tactical blunder of convincing the great Tory ladies that their Monarch was their arch enemy.

Of the official intercourse, carried on personally through State Papers, or in notes which Victoria and Melbourne exchanged sometimes three or four times a day, only occasional glimpses are obtained

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 79.

from her diary. Her correspondence does not entirely elucidate the subject. The Prime Minister's work lay largely out of sight. The greater part of it was performed under conditions which precluded the possibility of a record being available. "He had to teach her", as Bertram Newman, Lord Melbourne's recent biographer, expresses it, "the position assigned to the Crown in that complex organism, the English Constitution, and that at a time when the slow crystallization of practice and opinion which is English constitutional history was only just beginning to forbid the Sovereign an active intervention in party politics. He had to indicate to her the boundaries which lay between the real and nominal powers which were vested in her office, to initiate her into the actual workings of a system which was too dependent on half-acknowledged compromises and unwritten precedents to be comprised in any code of rules." [1]

Judging by the results of the lessons in English constitutional law which the experienced statesman gave the novice Queen, the conclusion is irresistible that Melbourne did not succeed in impressing upon Victoria those salutary truths which are now accepted as fundamental. It may have been that the strong-minded girl asserted her own personality. It may have been that in her innocent simplicity she was so captivated by the statesman's charm that she felt it was her duty to champion his political tenets.

Such considerations are of little importance.

[1] *Lord Melbourne*, by Bertram Newman (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1930), p. 237.

What matters is, as has already been emphasized, that until Stockmar was able to get Prince Albert to impress upon her that the Crown should soar above partisan politics, Victoria gave vent to political feelings. She was such a violent Whig that when in residence at Windsor she is said to have refused to cross the Thames and to go to Eton because she considered it a nest of Tories.[1]

The Baron, German though he was, was conscious of the perils latent in Melbourne's sins of omission and of commission which made Victoria the standard bearer of a political party. He did not hesitate to speak frankly to the Prime Minister on this subject. So strong, however, was his sense of proportion that his condemnation of this phase of the Queen's apprenticeship did not interfere with his keen sense of appreciation of all that Melbourne's leadership meant to the nation. His intellectual faculties were so admirably balanced that he was able to gauge all matters from their proper perspective. It was this faculty which caused the Whig Premier to write of him that "Stockmar is not only an excellent man, but also one of the most sensible I have ever met".[2]

If Victoria's youthful enthusiasm caused her to refrain from following the Baron's sound constitutional dogma,[3] it was not because Leopold had not fully apprised her of Stockmar's special attain-

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. II, p. 251.

[2] *Memoirs of Baron Stockmar*, by his son, Baron E. von Stockmar, translated from the German (London : Longmans, Green & Co., 1872), vol. I, p. 387.

[3] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 36.

ments. In a letter addressed to my "dearest child", dated 30 June 1837 and therefore read long before "the faithfully attached Uncle and Friend" had demonstrated that he was an incorrigible egoist, this passage occurs:

"I recommend to your kind attention what Stockmar will think it his duty to tell you; he will never press anything, never plague you with anything, without the thorough conviction that it is indispensable for your welfare. I can guarantee his independence of mind and disinterestedness; nothing makes an impression on him but what his experience makes him feel to be of importance for you." [1]

Leopold had wasted his time in setting forth these self-evident facts. Had he been anything of a psychologist he would have recalled that Victoria had known Stockmar intimately for years and that this friendship had long since borne fruit. Had he been a student of human nature it would have been plain to him that before this letter reached her she had made up her mind either to trust the Baron implicitly or to refuse him her confidence. It is impossible to argue with women. They reach their conclusions with a sureness of touch and an accuracy of judgment that often makes the masculine mind seem hopelessly clumsy. All this verbiage in which Stockmar was recommended to Victoria's "kind attention" was thus unnecessary.

It was similarly entirely superfluous for the King to write that:

"No one is better qualified to direct your studies

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 81.

for the next few years than Stockmar, few people possess more general information, and very, very few have been like him educated, as it were, by fate itself since 1816. There is no branch of information in which he may not prove useful. . . . Stockmar would have the *immense* advantage, for so young a Queen, to be a living dictionary of all matters scientific and politic that happened these thirty years, which to you is of the greatest importance, because you *must study* the political history of at least the last thirty-seven years *more particularly*." [1]

It was not politic for the King of the Belgians to tell the Queen of England that she *must study* this or that. It was not wise on his part to emphasize this officiousness by underlining the words even if he was the uncle who had helped to support the niece when she needed ready cash—but when there was more than a possibility that she might one day wield a mighty sceptre. He had already read her letter of 19 June 1837 in which she had said that "I am (thankful) to have Stockmar here; he has *been* and *is* of the greatest possible use, and be assured, dearest Uncle, that he possesses my *most entire confidence*." [2]

All that tirade about Stockmar's accomplishments, tact and love could not have served any useful purpose after he possessed Victoria's *most entire confidence*. Leopold may well have vouched—and he did—for the Baron's mastery of "(1) History considered in a practical and philosophical way; (2) International Law and everything connected with it; (3) Political Economy, an important

[1] *Ibid.* [2] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

branch nowadays ; (4) Classic studies ; (5) *Belles Lettres* in general ; and (6) Physical Science in all its branches " ; [1] but these realms of knowledge, important as they were, were of no value to the Queen compared to her realization of the fact that Stockmar was a " good honest friend " and " one of those few people who tell plain honest truth ".[2]

Victoria could have retained the services of experienced professors to teach her History, International Law, Political Economy, *Belles Lettres*, Physical Science and what Leopold calls " classic studies ". But no gold could have bought her the counsel of " one of those few people who tell plain honest truth ". And even if it had, all the wealth of Crœsus could not have constrained a headstrong girl to believe in such a person if she had taken a dislike to him.

Leopold had already had Victoria's categorical assurance in her letter written on the eve of her accession on 19 June 1837, that " I have *never showed* myself, *openly* to belong to *any party* and I do *not* belong to any party ".[3] By attempting to hector her he put her, without intending to do so, and without her knowing that he had done so, into a frame of mind which counteracted Stockmar's effort to keep her out of party politics. The Baron, however, was far too clear visioned a diagnostician to endeavour to force his views upon her who trusted him.

Stockmar made no attempt to discuss " the

[1] *Letter*, First Series, vol. I, p. 82.
[2] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 193.
[3] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 74.

political history of at least the last thirty years". He did not seek to breast the current. He watched its ebb and flow. Whenever the moment was propitious he deftly exerted his influence and thus held Victoria's partisanship within safe bounds.

Stockmar adhered for more than a year to his policy of unobtrusive activity but of unrelenting vigilance without occupying any publicly defined post. The Queen had no official Private Secretary. The duties of such a position, as regards affairs of state, were filled in part by Melbourne, who had more frequent personal intercourse with the Sovereign than is usual on the part of a Premier. Baroness Lehzen, *dearest* Lehzen, retained charge of the purely personal affairs. But there remained an unfilled gap which the Baron breached.

These ill-defined functions created what appears to be an anomalous position made doubly so by the fact that it was a foreigner who thus became the means of communication between the Queen and his Ministers in many official matters. That Stockmar was able to maintain this position for fifteen months was possible only because of his tact, discretion, disinterestedness and honour—and because both the Queen's Ministers and the leaders of the opposition were convinced that he possessed all these rare virtues.

The personal equation linked the Baron to Melbourne. If Greville's facts be accurate the Premier must have been grateful to him for having unmasked the weakness of the Duchess and the treason of Conroy. It was known that Stockmar considered it his duty, in the interests of the Queen

and of the Crown, to resist the Ministers when he felt that they were acting from party motives. This loyalty to the throne made the Tories respect his impartial attitude and caused them to be reluctant to attack a man whose disinterestedness converted him into their champion.

As is the rule with strong men, there was no false modesty about the Baron. False modesty is invariably a reflex of inordinate vanity. He knew who he was and what he was. He did not seek to intrude his personality or his views, but he was not one who would allow himself to be brushed aside when he considered that it behoved him to stand his ground.

One day Abercromby, the Speaker of the House of Commons, told the Prime Minister, more or less officially, that he felt it would be his duty to call attention in Parliament to the unconstitutional position of "that foreigner, Stockmar". Melbourne replied that the Baron, with the knowledge of the Ministers, filled a gap in certain relations and that he would oppose any inquiry. The matter was not pressed. When, somewhat later, it was mentioned incidentally to Stockmar, he said: "Tell Abercromby to bring forward his motion against me in Parliament; I shall know how to defend myself."[1] It is not said whether the challenge was reported to the Speaker. All that is known is that the question was not raised.

Not only did the Baron have "his exits and his entrances" in the Whig camp and in the citadel of the Tories, but he was the harbour of refuge of

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 325.

many of those who had complaints to lodge at Court or who sought the royal favour. The story is told of a rich Englishman, obviously not a gentleman, but an author and a member of Parliament, who called on him one day and offered to give him £10,000 if he would further the politician's petition for a peerage. Stockmar's equanimity remained unperturbed. He arose and said with icy courtesy. "I shall now go into the next room, in order to give you time to leave. If, upon my return, I still find you here, I shall have you thrown out by the servants." [1]

The man who was thus so summarily dismissed naturally sought for an opportunity to attack the Baron. No direct proof of his vindictiveness is available. It is known, however, that between 1839 and 1850 there frequently appeared in papers like *The Age*, journals devoted to fun, scandal and personal rancour, articles which attacked "the intriguer Stockmar, the agent of the Jesuit Leopold".[2] For such assaults, says his son, "he had the skin of a rhinoceros".

Criticisms of this nature at times somewhat annoyed Melbourne. He perhaps construed them as implying that he was under the influence of the occult powers attributed to the Jesuits, although Leopold was not a Catholic. Politicians have a holy horror of the disciples of Ignatius largely because they know nothing about them. On one occasion when these poisoned darts were launched at Melbourne—or when he thought that they were—he remarked :

[1] *Memoirs*, vol. I, p. lxxv, note. [2] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 36.

"King Leopold and Stockmar are very good and intelligent people, but I dislike it very much to hear it said by my friends that I am influenced by them. It is not true but still I dislike to hear it said." [1]

These trivial incidents serve to emphasize the successful manner in which Stockmar carried out his self-allotted part in making Victoria's reign an important chapter in the constitutional history of England. He maintained an impregnable position behind the scenes by effacing himself and by making himself invaluable, by lending his influence to the Whigs and by demonstrating to the Tories that he was their defender, while never carrying water on both shoulders because he was always sincere.

Lord Grey was perhaps the first English statesman who became the Baron's friend. Palmerston did not yield to Melbourne in his regard for him. Sir Robert Peel did not give way to Lord Aberdeen in the affection that he felt for him. They knew that he was not only broadminded but that he was internationally minded; that his range of information was almost all-embracing and that he was always prepared to listen to others and to open to them the treasures of his own mind. They saw that he maintained an attitude of observation and contemplation and that he had no wish to capitalize his attainments or his advantages.

During the months when Stockmar's influence grew steadily because the friendships he had won caused nobody of any importance to challenge

[1] *Denkwurdigkeiten*, p. 325.

him, one question dominated his mind—the choice of Victoria's consort. He felt this was far more important than her association with the Whig party, for he was convinced that, sooner or later, her attitude towards politics would be shaped by whoever became her husband. He hoped to be able to keep this spirit of partisanship within reasonable limits until she married.

It had long been Leopold's wish that Victoria should marry her cousin, his nephew, Francis Charles Augustus Albert Emmanuel, the second son of Ernest, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. She was aware of his plan,[1] but while she described Albert on 18 May 1836 as " extremely handsome ", and found his eyes " large and blue ", said that " he has a beautiful nose and a very sweet mouth with fine teeth ", and remarked that " the charm of his countenance is his expression, which is most delightful, *c'est à la fois* full of goodness and sweetness, and very clever and intelligent ", and while they " played and sang ",[2] she felt merely a sisterly affection for him and there was not a trace on either side of deeper sentiment.[3]

We have just given the official version as expressed by Lord Esher. We are by no means convinced that it tallies with the facts. The " most affectionate, devoted and grateful niece " wrote her " dearest uncle " as early as 7 June 1836 that :

" I must thank you, my beloved uncle, for the prospect of *great* happiness you have contributed to give me, in the person of dear Albert. Allow

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. II, p. 153.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 157. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 140.

me, then, my dearest uncle, to tell you how delighted I am with him and how much I like him in every way. He possesses every quality that could be desired to render me perfectly happy. . . .

I have only now to beg you, my dearest uncle, to take care of the health of one, now *so dear* to me, and to take him under *your special* protection. I hope and trust that all will go on prosperously and well on this subject of so much importance to me." [1]

It seems fantastic to make out that Victoria was not in love with Albert when she wrote that letter; and why the editor of her Diaries, with it in front of him, should affirm that "there is no indication that her heart was touched",[2] is a mystery which there is no point in trying to solve. The salient fact is that Stockmar knew of what she had written on 7 June 1836 and was aware of Leopold's wishes when he went to England in 1837. According to Martin's authorized life of the Prince Consort, Stockmar's purpose, on this visit, was to pave the way for the marriage of Victoria and Albert, provided his inquiries on the spot satisfied him that it was likely to be a satisfactory match.[3]

The Queen's Diaries show that, woman-like, she evinced an inclination to change her mind and that after her accession she appeared to be disinclined to marry him whose health had been so

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 49.

[2] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 140.

[3] *The Life of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort*, by Theodore Martin (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1877), vol. I, pp. 16 *et seq.*

dear to her in June 1836. This attitude becomes readily understandable when we read in Esher's introductory note to Chapter IX of *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria* that:

"In the month of April (1838) King Leopold was engaged in suggesting to the Queen the possibility of a union between her and Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg. He wrote constantly to her upon this topic, laying stress upon the young Prince's goodness and distinction, and upon his great anxiety to see his intellectual and moral training perfected under the auspices of Baron Stockmar." [1]

It is difficult to conceive of a more perfect example of bad psychology than this exhibition on the part of that able statesman known to fame as Leopold I of Belgium. His conduct was enough to make any girl defiant. It shows yet again how a man may be an adept in managing a state and in turning politicians around his finger and yet be woefully deficient in dealing with a woman. He knew—or should have known—that Victoria loved Albert and that she had said that "he is sensible, so kind and so good and so amiable too".[2] Notwithstanding this seal of approval, given in such formal terms and with all the finality of youth, the "dearest uncle" saw fit to insist that the man whom she considered "possesses every quality that could be desired to render me perfectly happy" should be inspected by Stockmar, just as if the Baron were a vet. and Albert a stallion offered for sale.

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 291.
[2] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 49.

The fact that Stockmar kept Victoria's confidence and friendship in the face of Leopold's lack of psychology, and that she sent him to the Continent to take Albert in hand, affords unmistakable evidence of Stockmar's tact and of the moral ascendancy that he had gained over the Queen. It is a woman's privilege to be capricious. It is her birthright to resent advice and suggestions in the choice of a husband—even though circumstances may compel her to yield to the counsel thrust upon her. The King's unnecessary insistence would probably have jeopardized the Coburg marriage so dear to his heart, if fate had not been kind to him in providing Stockmar to correct his mistakes of judgment.

CHAPTER VI

"MRS. MELBOURNE"

IT was Stockmar's disinterestedness which enabled him to play a prominent part in bringing about Victoria's marriage to Albert. He had no axe to grind. Leopold's poor judgment was due to the fact that his desire to rule England was so all consuming that he allowed his overweening ambition to cause him to commit a tactical blunder. A Coburg, he was not content that Britain's Queen should be the daughter of a Coburg Princess. He desired that she should wed a Coburg in order that her descendants should be Coburgs. And his thoughts were centred upon having these Coburgs reflect his will.

Leopold was obsessed with the idea that Melbourne, for some selfish reason, was opposed to Victoria marrying anybody. He was haunted by the recollection that Elizabeth had never wedded and that England had regretted that Mary and Anne had not had the same inspiration. When he found an answer to these fears, he was tormented by the dread that his "ever devoted niece" might attach special weight to the view of William IV who had been radically opposed to another Coburg entering the English royal family and who had urged that this honour should go to a younger son of the Prince of Orange.

There is one entry in Victoria's diary which may have caused Leopold the gravest anxiety. It is there reported that Melbourne said that an "Italian and an English makes [sic] the finest animal in the world; it is the mixture of nations that makes the finest specimens of the human race."[1] If the King of the Belgians knew that the Queen and her Prime Minister were discussing eugenics and favoured a Latin-Saxon strain, he no doubt saw visions of an Italian prince dispossessing him of the power he craved.

Leopold's fear at losing the power for which he longed closed his eyes to the fact that England would not have consented to permit her Sovereign to marry anyone who had been born a Catholic. He himself did not take religion seriously. To him it was a means to an end, something that should be used for political purposes. He thus may have created for himself a difficulty which would never have troubled him had he been able to understand how fundamentally anti-Catholic were the English of his time.

Stockmar had no such worries to torment him. His sole concern was Victoria's welfare. Her mind was an open book to him. She may have imagined, as she herself has declared, that "the sudden change from the secluded life at Kensington to the independence of her position as Queen Regnant, at the age of eighteen, put all ideas of marriage out of her mind".[2] He knew, however, that she was mistaken, that she was in love with Albert, and

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. II, p. 152.
[2] *Early Years*, p. 220.

that, if she were left to her own resources, she would marry the man of her choice when the favourable moment came.

The Baron was by no means certain that the Prince who ruled Victoria's heart, while her mind was distracted by her new environment, measured up to the proper standard. He agreed with Melbourne, who held that the man who aspired to be the Consort of the Queen of England would need a combination of virtues seldom granted to a mere mortal. He shared the Prime Minister's view, who, one day, said to her, "If we have to *make* a man we should not know what to make." [1]

Stockmar was far too adroit to contradict the Queen and to tell her that she was living in a fool's paradise, if she really thought that she had put all ideas of marriage out of her head. He did not intimate to her that he was opposed to Albert's candidature. His policy was one of watchful expectancy, guided solely by a determination to subserve her best interests. He had abiding confidence in her common sense, her intuition, and her realization of her responsibilities. He resolved to let matters take their own course, to frustrate any attempt on Leopold's part to force a decision and to hold himself in readiness to take any step that Victoria might suggest to him—while deftly working towards having her make the suggestion that he deemed appropriate.

Leopold did not content himself with constantly writing Victoria in the spring of 1838, suggesting the possibility of a union between her and his

[1] *Lord Melbourne*, p. 274.

nephew and stressing Albert's "goodness and distinction". On the contrary, his burning desire to have a Coburg assure the realization of his dream caused him to urge Stockmar, in March of that year, to press the Prince's suit. His letter points out that, "if I am not very much mistaken he (Albert) possesses all the qualities required to fit him completely for the position he will occupy in England. His understanding is sound—his apprehension clear and rapid—and his feelings in all matters appertaining to personal appearance, quite right. He has great powers of observation, and possesses much prudence, without anything about him that can be called cold and morose." [1]

This attempt to force matters did not stampede Stockmar. The Queen had made it quite clear to her uncle and probably to the Baron that she could not think of marriage for the next three or four years. Stockmar realized the extent to which Victoria was captivated by the romantic Virgin Queen tradition of Elizabeth, and he resolved to do nothing which might convert her expressed intention of postponing the choice of a consort into a fixed determination born of her natural stubbornness.

Leopold could not understand why Stockmar refrained from attempting to precipitate matters. He had recognized, by this time, that the Baron exercised great influence over the Queen. He was most anxious that it should be brought into play to have a Coburg share Victoria's throne—and facilitate his control of England's foreign politics.

[1] *Early Years*, p. 218.

When he saw that his letter eulogizing the Prince had not produced any results, he returned to the charge on 12 April 1838, writing to the effect that "Albert is much improved; he looks so manly. . . . If he waits till he is in his twenty-first, twenty-second or twenty-third year, it will be impossible for him to begin any new career, and his whole life would be *marred*, if the Queen should change her mind."[1]

Neither Victoria's *Diaries* nor Stockmar's *Denkwürdigkeiten*, not to speak of *The Early Years of the Prince Consort* or other available sources of material, reveal whether the Baron showed this letter to the Queen. It is probable that he carried it about with him, awaiting an opportune moment to read it to her. He himself was radically opposed to her emulating Elizabeth's example. He knew that Albert's hold on her heart was too secure for that to be possible, always provided that the undue precipitation of her uncle did not bring about the unfortunate result of arousing in her a spirit of contradiction. He felt that if he bided his time and let her see what Leopold had said about the possibility of Albert's life being marred "if the Queen should change her mind", he might be able to turn the current of Victoria's thoughts in the direction he desired.

All women change their mind, except those who revel in an emancipation that spells abdication. Victoria belonged to the group which prefers the substance of authority to its shadow. She accordingly felt that she had a perfect right to change her mind—and to deny that she ever did so.

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 330.

It fitted in with the Queen's conception of her royal prerogative—that is to say with her construction of her rights as a woman—to prove to her "dearest uncle" that she did not change her mind. She did this by renouncing her expressed determination not to think of marrying for three or four years and by suddenly deciding to send Stockmar to the Continent to subject Albert to careful scrutiny and a proper course of training. She was too circumspect to write Leopold that she had no thought of changing her mind. The *Denkwürdigkeiten* tell us, however, that she instructed the Baron "in writing to accompany the Prince on a journey taken with a view to the completion of his (Albert's) education".

This letter is not available, if it still exists. But it is referred to in the paragraph immediately following Leopold's language about the impossibility of Albert beginning a new career at twenty-three and about his life being "*marred*, if the Queen should change her mind". It is not altogether unreasonable, therefore, to imagine that Stockmar's discreet and masterly use of an ill-advised phrase, indicative of the King's overwrought anxiety, induced a self-willed girl to do what she wanted to do without realizing that she intended to do it. This was certainly not a case to which one could apply the Biblical text: "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind."

And yet if Leopold had planted thistles and gathered roses, Stockmar had reaped what he had sown. "In all that he did for the Queen", said Lord Liverpool of him to Sir Robert Peel in 1841,

"his only ambition was to be of service to her."[1] He had impressed this upon Victoria, even before her accession. It was her realization of it that had caused him to be entrusted with the delicate mission which meant so much to her.

Stockmar had already formed a somewhat favourable opinion of Albert before accepting this dangerous trust. He had written of him to Leopold in the beginning of 1836, when William IV was still living but when Victoria was already recognized as the heiress apparent of the Crown of England:

"He (the Prince) is a fine young fellow, well grown for his age, with agreeable and valuable qualities, and who, if things go well, may, in a few years, turn out to be a strong, handsome man of a kindly, simple, yet dignified demeanour. . . . But now the question is, how as to his mind? . . . Until I have observed him longer, I can form no judgment as to his capacity and the probable development of his character. He is said to be circumspect, discreet, and even now cautious. But all this is not enough. He ought to have not merely great ability, but a *right* ambition and great force of will as well. To pursue for a lifetime a political career so arduous demands more than energy and inclination—it demands also that earnest frame of mind which is ready, of its own accord, to sacrifice real pleasure to real usefulness."[2]

This shows that if Stockmar may have said that he agreed with Melbourne: "if we have to *make*

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 361.
[2] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 18.

a man" to be worthy of being the Consort of the Queen of England, "we should not know what to make", he really had very well-defined ideas upon the subject. He had long since made up his mind, with typical German thoroughness, to assist nature and to work a piece of plastic material into shape. He declined to commit himself to a definitive opinion until he had taken the human clay into his own hands. But this letter to Leopold, written long before the Queen had given Stockmar his mandate, shows that he had a clear-cut conception of what he had in view.

Albert started for Italy, accompanied by Stockmar, in December 1838. The Prince knew the Baron only slightly and seems to have been at a loss to understand why so important a man was attached to his suite. He at once fell under the influence of the charm which had never failed to impress those who came within its orbit. One of his earlier letters at home gave the information that "the society of a man so highly distinguished as Baron Stockmar was most precious and valuable" to him.[1]

While the experienced man of the world was thus winning encomiums from the Prince whom he was subjecting to the closest surveillance, his thoughts often wandered from Italy to England. Victoria's political partisanship gave Stockmar the gravest concern. His mastery of the British Constitution was so thorough that he could see that her reign would be a dismal failure if she allowed herself to descend from the high pedestal of the

[1] *Early Years*, p. 207.

Queen of the Nation to that of the Queen of the Whigs. As long as he had been by her side to counteract the effect of Melbourne's influence she had not unduly committed herself. But when he undertook the mission born of her determination to show "dearest uncle" Leopold that she had not changed her mind, the ship of State made for troubled waters.

It is impossible to prove by documentary evidence that it was the Baron's influence which had prevented Victoria from unduly committing herself to the Whig party. What he did was carried out behind the scenes. He was "the Invisible man". No official records can be adduced to establish the nature of his services to the Crown and to the State. The fact stands out, however, that after he had left England to take Albert in hand there was no discreet and firm counsellor in the inner circles of the royal palace. The so-called Bed-Chamber Question and the melancholy incident connected with Lady Flora Hastings are cases in point.

In May 1839 the Melbourne Cabinet found itself in so small a majority, on a question connected with the Constitution of Jamaica, that it felt forced to resign. The Queen very properly sent for Sir Robert Peel, the leader of the Tories, and declared to him, with a frankness which Stockmar would have considered out of place, that she regretted exceedingly parting with her Ministers, with whom she was perfectly satisfied.

This introduction did not prevent the continuation of the usual negotiations. Everything went

on quite normally until Peel insisted that as the ladies "recommended" to the Queen at her accession were "exclusively Whig" and that as a consequence "the female part of the Royal Household" had "a political complexion", Tory ladies should also be appointed [1] by Victoria.

A discussion followed in which she denied Peel's right to suggest these changes. Stockmar was away and could not be consulted. Melbourne supported her intransigent attitude. With his approval the following note was sent to the Tory leader:

"The Queen, having considered the proposal made to her yesterday by Sir Robert Peel to remove the ladies of the Bed-Chamber, cannot consent to adopt a course which she conceives to be contrary to usage, and which is repugnant to her feelings."

Stockmar's *Denkwürdigkeiten* makes it clear that he considered that, from a constitutional point of view, Peel was in the right. He brings out that if formerly the bedchamber may have had no political complexion, it had taken on a Whig note, that the public looked upon the Queen as being a Whig and that the Tories were justified in insisting upon dissipating the partisan atmosphere which surrounded the young Sovereign. The Baron blamed Melbourne for having permitted Victoria to show her political sentiments in a manner that was both constitutionally untenable and strategically unwise. He expressed himself in these unequivocal terms:

"The late events in England distress me. How could they let the Queen make such mistakes to

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 65.

the injury of the monarchy? Melbourne ought to have allowed the nation to make the practical experiment, whether a Tory Cabinet can really hold its own. In his place I should have been glad to have seen Wellington and Peel for some time at the helm. For if they succeeded, the proof would have been made that Melbourne's Cabinet could, under no circumstances, have remained in power much longer. If they did not succeed, the respect due to the Queen remained intact and Melbourne would, in the eyes of the world, have been justified or rather called upon to return to office with a modified Cabinet." [1]

This detached view of matters, this objectivity in his approach to problems of State, was the secret of Stockmar's serenity of judgment. He was essentially a diagnostician. The bedside manner of an experienced medical practitioner was transferred from the sick-room to the council chamber. The symptoms which were visible to his senses told him what remedies were necessary. If he stopped to criticize Melbourne, it was not because the personal equation played a part in his approach to the problem, but because, knowing that Victoria's mind was still in a plastic state, he considered that as long as she was exposed to the same contagion, recurring attacks of the trouble were inevitable.

The Baron's prognosis was as accurate as his diagnosis. Victoria's popularity had been subjected to a severe strain by this bedchamber incident. Melbourne was essentially a lady's man,

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 336.

so much so that he had figured as a co-respondent in divorce cases. He failed, nevertheless, to understand the destructive power of a woman's spleen. Stockmar, as a doctor, knew that this organ produces certain modifications in the blood which beget not only low spirits but also ill temper and spite. He foresaw that the hatred of these Tory ladies, who resented their exclusion from the bedchamber, would direct an unrelenting attack upon Victoria.

The Premier, specializing in appeals to the heart of women, and knowing more of their smiles than of their vindictiveness, was unable to grasp the potentialities of the offence he had committed. An unfortunate incident soon presented itself where Stockmar's medical training would in all probability have been of incalculable help to the Queen and to Melbourne in obviating a regrettable episode, which was ripe with all kinds of disagreeable possibilities.

It appears that Lady Flora Hastings, who was attached to the suite of the Duchess of Kent, a Tory stronghold, and who was on duty at the Queen's Court, gave signs, shortly after Melbourne's return to office, of a change in her contour, which caused malicious tongues to wag.

The Whig ladies of the bedchamber revelled at the opportunity of bringing the matter to Victoria's knowledge. They appear to have had their task facilitated by an incorrigible Tory gossip in the person of the Duke of Wellington, who, however, insisted that the "jokes which were current" were "never intended to assume the shape of a

serious charge" but were "rather matters of joke and loose talk".[1]

Stockmar took, as we know, a fatherly interest in the success of Victoria's reign. When he had left her, on Sunday, 12 August 1838, he had impressed on her that she should ask Melbourne's "advice just like a *Father*". He meant by this that the Prime Minister should assume his place and safeguard the moral atmosphere of the palace and protect the Queen against such "jokes and loose talk" as those in which Wellington appears to have taken part, and which Melbourne does not seem to have curbed. Had Stockmar been in London when these outrageous libels were current about the reputation of a daughter of a distinguished family, not only his sense of propriety but his knowledge of medicine would have been used to curb so ill-advised a discussion.

But it was all so badly handled that the Court Physician, Sir James Clarke, "pronounced that Lady Flora Hastings had the appearance of being with child".[2] Such a declaration, coming from a Doctor of Medicine, was as meaningless as it was damning. "Medical evidence", says Greville, "was either demanded by her (Lady Flora) or submitted to, and the result was satisfactory" to her virtue. "Not only was the original diagnosis of Sir James Clarke wholly at fault, but Lady Flora was in fact very ill. She was affected by 'dropsy' in the womb, which also accounts for her appearance of pregnancy."[3]

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 45. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 46.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

The dropsy made such rapid progress that the now maligned Tory lady-in-waiting soon died. An autopsy established her innocence beyond doubt. Victoria paid the price for Melbourne's inability to act as a Father to her when Stockmar was not there to hold the Prime Minister's partisanship in leash and to put a check upon his interest in ill-advised "matters of joke and loose talk". One day, when the Queen appeared at her balcony, the assembled multitude shouted "Mrs. Melbourne". On another occasion the Duchess of Montrose and Lady Sarah Ingestrie hissed her from Erroll's stand at Ascot as she drove up the course.[1]

Stockmar, although a martyr to indigestion and afflicted with bad eyesight, was an optimist. One of his friends once remarked that it was a blessing from Heaven that he was a chronic invalid, as otherwise his indefatigable energy would have made him insupportably active. He thus faced with a smile the difficult situation brought out by those blunders in psychology which had characterized Melbourne's conduct of public affairs during his absence.

He saw that the Queen's popularity had reached so low an ebb, and that the prestige of the dynasty had been subjected to so severe a strain, that the safest outlet from the obvious danger was to cut loose from the errors of the past and to commit Victoria's future to the protection and counsel of a husband. He knew that all the world loves a lover. He determined to facilitate the early realization of what he was convinced was Victoria's ardent wish.

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 79.

CHAPTER VII

VICTORIA'S BETROTHAL

THOUGH Stockmar may have welcomed the opportunity of diverting public attention from the constitutional issue brought about by Melbourne's lack of judgment, he would not have sought to accomplish his purpose by throwing around Victoria the halo of romance, had he not been convinced that Albert would be the right man in the right place. The Prime Minister's blunder had been a serious one. Even if it had been infinitely greater, the Baron would not have jeopardized the Queen's happiness if the results of his investigations into the Prince's suitability had not been thoroughly satisfactory.

By the time when Melbourne's tactlessness brought matters to a head, no doubt lingered in Stockmar's mind about Albert's mental and moral fitness to be the Consort of England's Queen. If the Baron had a moment's hesitation it was because he feared that the health of the Prince was not as robust as was desirable. He thus expresses his misgivings on this score :

" His constitution cannot be said to be a strong one, though I believe that by careful attention to diet, he could easily strengthen it and give it stamina. After exerting himself, he often for a

short time appears pale and exhausted. He dislikes violent exertion, and both morally and physically tries to save himself." [1]

While Victoria had, as has already been said, requested the Baron to accompany Albert upon his tour of Italy, and while she had made Stockmar fully aware of the feelings which prompted her instructions,[2] she, womanlike, hesitated to face the ordeal which confronted her. She was a daughter of her epoch. She wanted to be wooed and won. And yet she was jealous of her royal attributes. She knew that Albert dare not ask for her hand. She resented the fact that her sceptre took precedence over her sex, although she held most tenaciously to her prerogatives. She was in a quandary. She did not recognize how embarrassed she was as she found solace for her troubled spirits by persuading herself that "for four years she could think of no marriage".[3]

Victoria apprised her faithful mentor of her decision. He did not attempt to gainsay her. He was too politic a man to contradict a woman, much less a Queen, and still less a Queen Regnant—who was in love. He fell in with her idea, explaining to her that as her resolution to remain unmarried for four more years was irrevocable it was only fair that Albert should be informed of it. He mentioned, quite casually, but none the less clearly, that the Prince should be advised by her in person of this decision.

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 331.
[2] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 27.
[3] *Early Years*, p. 246.

The upshot of this suggestion was that the Queen made an entry in her diary on 12 July 1839, in which she recorded that she "talked of my cousins Ernest and Albert coming over—my having no great wish to see Albert, as the whole subject was an odious one, and one which I hated to decide about; there was no engagement between us, I said, but that the young man was aware that there was no possibility of such a union; I said it wasn't right to keep him on and not right to decide before they came; and Lord M. said I should make them distinctly understand anyhow I couldn't do anything for a year." [1]

Victoria's sense of fairness caused her to let her "dearest uncle" Leopold know that if she invited Albert to visit her "she wished the affair to be considered as broken off".[2] The Prince took her at her word. He decided to forestall her declaration by asking her to release him from an engagement which her diary asserts had never existed. We doubt that his ambitious Coburg uncle would have permitted him to assume any such attitude. He, nevertheless, wrote Prince von Löwenstein that "I therefore went with the quiet but firm resolution to declare, on my part, that I also, tired of the delay, withdrew entirely from the affair".[3]

Albert's arrival was announced on 10 October 1839. Victoria had spent the eve with her Prime Minister, little knowing what the morrow would mean to her. "After dinner we were seated much as usual," she writes, "Lord Melbourne sitting

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. II, p. 215.
[2] *Early Years*, p. 246. [3] *Ibid.*

near me, but both he and I were sleepy and I very tired. Talked of my having over-walked myself. 'You'll be better tomorrow,' he said, 'after a deep sleep'; and when I said it was reckoned a bad thing to sleep immediately after eating, he said, 'Reckoned? who reckons it so?', and that he thought it a very good thing." [1]

Stockmar was in no sense perturbed by the influence that Melbourne continued to exercise over Victoria after having almost endangered her crown by stupidly arousing the ire of the women of the Tory party. He had implicit confidence in Albert's ability to solve the constitutional problems which still hovered in the offing. It meant nothing to him that the next day the Queen got up late and then strolled on the terrace and new walk, Lord Melbourne walking near her the whole time.[2] He felt that before another day would dawn Cupid would take over the reins of State and relegate the Prime Minister to his official duties.

Victoria and Melbourne were sauntering along the new walk when a page came running with a letter from Uncle Leopold announcing that Ernest and Albert were due to arrive at any moment. "I said to Lord M.," records the Queen, "I was sure they would come this day, but he would never believe it." [3] The old gentleman probably thought that Victoria's letter breaking off the engagement had been so categorical that Albert would not put in an appearance. He was mistaken. The same diary entry goes on to add:

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. II, p. 261.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 262. [3] *Ibid.*

"At 1/2 p. 7 I went to the top of the staircase and received my 2 dear cousins Ernest and Albert,—whom I found grown and changed and embellished. It was with some emotion that I beheld Albert—who is *beautiful*. I embraced them both and took them to Mamma ; having no clothes they couldn't appear at dinner." [1]

When the Prince dined in private the Queen sat at table between Baron Brunow and Lord Melbourne.[2] She did not forget Albert, whom she had found "embellished", and she was disturbed by the fact that he did not have proper clothes with him.

That these deductions are not entirely fantastic is borne out by the Queen's memorandum :

"Talked to Lord Melbourne of my cousins having no baggage. . . . Talked . . . of their not appearing on account of their *négligé*, which Lord M. thought they ought to have done, at dinner and certainly after. . . . After dinner my cousins came in, in spite of their *négligé*, and I presented them to Lord Melbourne. I sat on the sofa with Lady Clanricarde, Lord Melbourne sitting near me, and Ernest near us and Albert opposite—(*he* is so handsome and pleasing)." [3]

The next evening dancing began at half-past nine. Victoria danced five quadrilles, the first with Ernest, the second "with dearest Albert who dances so beautifully", and the fifth with "dearest Albert again". It was "quite a pleasure to look at Albert when he gallops and valses, he does it so beautifully, holds himself so well with that beautiful

[1] *Ibid.* [2] *Ibid.*, p. 263. [3] *Ibid.*

figure of his ". The pace was too lively for Melbourne, who sat near the Queen "during the intervals and during the valses".[1] Nothing is said of Stockmar for the very cogent reason that the most tactful of men had remained on the Continent.

So thoroughly had the Baron prepared the ground that five days after Albert's arrival the Queen made this entry in her diary:

"*Tuesday*, 15 *October* 1839. At about 1/2 p. 12 I sent for Albert; he came to the Closet where I was alone, and after a few moments I said to him that I thought he must be aware *why* I wished him to come here,—and that it would make me *too happy* if he would consent to what I wished (to marry me). We embraced each other and he was *so* kind, *so* affectionate."[2]

It had hurt Victoria's pride to be constrained to propose to Albert. But, being desperately in love with her dearest cousin, and having convinced herself, during the happy hours he had spent with her, that he was too much of a Coburg to dare to take the initiative, she asked him to share her Throne with her. As soon as she had unburdened her soul, her sex reasserted itself and she "told him of the necessity of keeping it a secret except to his father and Uncle Leopold and Stockmar".[3]

Albert's letter to the Baron was short: "I write to you on one of the happiest days of my life to give you the most welcome news possible." And having described what had taken place he added, "Victoria is so good and kind to me that I am often at a loss

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. II, p. 264.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 268. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 269.

to believe that such affection should be shown to me. I know the great interest you take in my happiness and therefore pour out my heart to you. More, or more seriously I cannot write to you ; for at this moment, I am too bewildered,

> "Heaven opens on the ravish'd eye,
> The heart is all entranced in bliss." [1]

Leopold had felt that because his "dearest and most beloved Victoria" had refused to allow him to dictate England's foreign policy, she had put him "aside as one does with a piece of furniture which is no longer wanted".[2] She was so overflowing with happiness when Albert accepted her hand that she forgot these sarcastic remarks and, without an instant's delay, hastened to inform him of her engagement, asking him to "explain these details, which I have not time to do, to faithful Stockmar. I think you might tell Louise of it, but none of her family." [3]

On second thought, Victoria realized that Stockmar meant too much to her and that her happiness was too important to him for this message to suffice, even if it were sent by a Queen through a King. So she found time, on this memorable 15 October 1839, to write to the friend to whom she had so recently and so strongly expressed her resolution not to marry for some time that—

"I *do* feel so guilty, I know not how to begin my letter—but I think the news it will contain will

[1] *Early Years*, p. 225. These lines are taken from Schiller's "Song of the Bell".

[2] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 119.

[3] *Early Years*, p. 228.

be sufficient to ensure your forgiveness. Albert has completely won my heart, and all was settled between us this morning. I feel certain he will make me very happy. I wish I could say I felt as certain of *my* making him happy, but I shall do my best. Uncle Leopold must tell you all about the details which I have not time to do. Albert is very much attached to you." [1]

There is a human touch about this letter which is of striking interest. There is no formality about it. It shows, better than any commentary, how very close Stockmar was to Victoria.

The Baron's deft manœuvring in this entire matter is brought out by the letter which the Prince wrote him a few weeks later. Stockmar would not have been Stockmar if, when offering Albert his hearty congratulations, he had not interpolated into his reply wise counsel in regard to the course which the happy young man should pursue in order to lay the foundation of his future welfare and assure his fulfilling worthily the duties of his great trust. The Prince's answer, after expressing "a thousand, thousand thanks for your dear, kind letter", went on to say that "I felt sure you would take much interest in an event of such moment to myself, and for which you have yourself paved the way." [2]

Not only did Albert thus make it clear that Stockmar had "paved the way" to the royal engagement, but it would seem that the Baron had foretold the march of events. "Your prophecy is fulfilled," wrote the Prince. "The climax has

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 40. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

come upon me by surprise before we could have expected it."

Albert did not resent the advice proffered to him, for he said: "I have laid to heart your friendly and kind-hearted counsels as to the true foundation on which my happiness must rest." So carefully, indeed, had Stockmar prepared the ground when he and the Prince were touring Italy that his suggestions struck the young man as meriting his approval because "they accorded entirely with the principles which I had already thought out upon that subject for myself".[1]

The note of conceit which seems to be discernible in this remark is, however, dispelled by the concluding paragraph, in which the grateful young man assures his mentor that:

"I will not let my courage fail. With firm resolution and true zeal on my part, I cannot fail to continue 'noble, manly and princely' in all things. In regulating my actions good advice is the one thing needful; and that you can give me better than any one, if you will only make up your mind to sacrifice your time to me, at least for the first year of my being here."[2]

The hypochondriac who remained an optimist construed this letter not in the light of his chronic indigestion or bad vision but in the spirit of his buoyant nature. He had no difficulty in interpreting what it said or in reading the message which was contained between its lines. The invitation to come to Windsor and to remain near the Prince for at least a year was sent spontaneously

[1] *Ibid.* [2] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

and sprang from the heart. Stockmar saw no reason why it should not be accepted. He came all the more readily to this decision because he knew that it coincided with the Queen's wishes.

Stockmar had seen what had happened to Leopold, who had been assured by his "ever your devoted and grateful niece and affectionate *child*" on 25 June 1837 that "*your* advice is always of the *greatest importance* to me",[1] and who had felt constrained to write to his "dearest and most beloved Victoria" on 1 June 1838 that "there is a great difference in claiming favours and in being treated as an enemy".[2] There was, of course, a radical divergence on the one hand between the motives that actuated the King and which impelled him to do tactless things, and on the other the sentiments that inspired the Baron and which made him the soul of discretion; but the lesson was none the less obvious. It was that his individuality should never protrude and that he should inspire Victoria and Albert with the thoughts which they would express to him as emanating from them.

If the Queen asked Stockmar's forgiveness because she had changed her mind and had proposed to Albert, and if the Prince assured him that he "had paved the way" for the event and that his "prophecy is fulfilled", Leopold, the Coburg who was vitally interested in this Coburg match, summoned the Baron to his side to take part in the deliberations in regard to the arrangements for Albert's establishment in England.[3] It seems that the King

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 79. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 120.
[3] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 339.

of the Belgians was most anxious to dominate these discussions. We suspect that he hoped to rule Britain through the Prince Consort after having failed to do so through the Sovereign. At all events, the problem, whatever may have been the objective he had in view, was deemed by him to require Stockmar's undivided attention for the entire month.

All the circumstances and difficulties connected with Albert's future position in England were examined in detail. It was agreed that the Baron should go to London as the Prince's Plenipotentiary and adjust the matter. It was not until 9 January 1840 that he reached his destination. He had not overlooked the possibility of important domestic complications when he and Leopold had been engaged in their conferences. On the contrary, he prepared the ground for dealing with them by winning over Albert's prospective mother-in-law and the indispensable Baroness Lehzen.

Albert was the nephew of Victoria's mother. His father was the brother of the Duchess of Kent. Stockmar knew that the Prince's aunt had deliberately attempted to deprive her own child of her birthright. He therefore felt that she might have no compunction about attempting to cast a pall over the love match which meant so much to England and to him. We thus see evidence of Albert courting his " dearest Aunt " and endeavouring to make a friend of her.

The Duchess's influence over Victoria may have been practically nil, and the proof that Stockmar suggested this burning of incense to her may be

inconclusive, but Lehzen was the Queen's confidante. She was "my *dear* Lehzen" and "will ALWAYS remain with me as my friend but take no situation about me, and I think she is right".[1] Such a factor in the royal household was a power which had to be propitiated. Here the evidence is irrefutable that the Baron took a hand in enlisting Lehzen's support. He did so by adroitly sending her a report telling her all about the Prince, so that she could feel that she knew more about him than did anybody in her environment.

Stockmar's letter to Lehzen shows that he had one dominant point in view in writing her. He desired that she should not interfere with the young couple and that she should let them work out their own happiness in their own way. It was for this reason that, in concluding his message, he said "you will therefore have my entire approval, if you think the best course is to leave him to his clear head, his sound feeling and excellent disposition".[2]

This systematic preparatory work facilitated Stockmar's task when he reached England as Albert's representative to arrange for the marriage. He negotiated with Lord Palmerston. Instead of being met with personal hostility, he was informed by the redoubtable champion of chauvinism that of all possible alliances that with Albert was the very best.

A week after the Baron's arrival the Queen opened Parliament and announced from the Throne

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 198.
[2] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 240.

her intended marriage. In the debate the Tories complained that in the notification Albert was not specifically designated as a Protestant prince. Wellington proposed in the House of Lords that the adjective "Protestant" should precede "Prince" in the address. His amendment was carried against the Government. This vote caused Palmerston to write to Stockmar asking him "whether Prince Albert belongs to any Protestant sect, the tenets of which could prevent him from partaking of the Lord's Supper, according to the rites of the Church of England?" [1]

This use of the word "sect" irritated the Baron. He was a Protestant. He knew that Catholics call attention to the fact that one of the ineluctable consequences of that freedom of individual judgment which is the cornerstone of Protestantism is the existence of countless Protestant sects. But it was galling to him to have such an inquiry put to him in an official letter and perhaps at a moment when his indigestion was more than ordinarily nerve-racking. He, accordingly, hastened to reply that the Prince did not belong to any sect and that no material difference exists between the celebration of the Lord's Supper according to the rites of the German Protestant Church—of course he meant the *Evangelischekirche*—and those of the Anglican denomination.

This tempest in a teapot may have aggravated Stockmar—if it did—but it was nothing like as important as the questions which related to Albert's civil list and to the rank he was to enjoy. They

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 343.

were made of moment largely because Melbourne, with characteristic carelessness refused to take them seriously.

His Ministry proposed to Parliament that the Prince's annuity should be fixed at £50,000, largely because Queens Caroline, Charlotte and Adelaide, Consorts respectively of George II, George III and William IV, had been accorded that amount, and because Leopold, when married to an heiress presumptive to the Throne, had been granted the same figure. But the Cabinet did not stir itself unduly to carry its measure. The Tories led by Colonel Sibthorp suggested £30,000. The Radicals urged £21,000.

When the Government whips reported that the Ministry's measure was in danger of defeat Melbourne was not disconcerted. "When I heard this", writes Stockmar, "I went to him and asked him whether he did not consider that the wisest thing to do would be to come to an understanding with the Opposition and whether he would not authorize me to enter into direct negotiations on the subject with Wellington and Peel. He answered 'No; my relations to the Duke have of late undergone a change. We are no longer on the footing we were, when you were last here.'" [1]

This reply shocked Stockmar. He considered that Melbourne had looked at the matter as one of party politics. The Baron refused to subscribe to any such doctrine. He held that the issue had no factional significance, that the Crown was above such considerations and that the question should

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 344.

have been dealt with confidentially by the various leaders as something which was removed from the arena of controversy. He saw in Melbourne's procedure, and in the consequences which flowed from it, a state of mind which attacked the very principle of the complete removal of the Throne from the maelstrom of politics.

CHAPTER VIII

ALBERT'S PRECEDENCE

IT was not because his relations with Stockmar were strained that Melbourne refused to follow the suggestion to treat the question of Albert's civil list and status as non-party measures. At almost the very moment when this subject was broached the Queen wrote on 22 January 1840:

"He (Melbourne) asked how Stockmar was, and wished to see him. 'I am always ready to see him, he is such a very clever man and he don't stay long.' 'He is one of the cleverest fellows I ever saw,'—'the most discreet man, the most well judging, and most cool man.' I said I told him I thought he (Stockmar) ought to stay a little while after the marriage, as it would be of use. 'Of infinite importance,' Lord M. replied." [1]

The Baron was also, even at that early date, very close to Peel, who then led the Tories in the House of Commons. A note by Viscount Esher makes this quite clear.[2] It is thus obvious that Melbourne, who had Victoria's welfare at heart, showed bad judgment in not allowing Stockmar to consult the leaders of the Opposition. He should have recalled that not only was the Baron

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. II, p. 303.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 303 (note).

Albert's representative but that he, himself, had urged that Stockmar should be requested to take a hand in preparing what was called the "Marriage Treaty".

Leopold, anxious to consolidate the influence of the Coburgs, took a deep interest in having Albert's rights expressed in black and white. "Uncle is also full of the necessity of a Marriage Treaty," recorded Victoria on Sunday, 8 December 1839. Though a strict observer of the Sabbath day, she considered the subject of such importance that she took it up with Melbourne. He said to her:

"I think the best, Ma'am, would be, if you approve, for Stockmar to be instructed with all they wish to be done, and to be sent over here directly, so as to settle it here before the meeting of Parliament." [1]

When he arrived in England, Stockmar carried discretion so far that he almost disappeared. He was so unobtrusive that the Queen refers to his having told nobody "where he lived" and to "Lord M. having sent all over the Town to find him out".[2] They were not surprised at his self-obliteration, for "he didn't like to press himself".[3]

When a man's services are sought after by both parties to an important agreement, when they know that he does not "like to press himself", when he so artfully artlessly conceals "where he lives" that he forces a Prime Minister to "send all over the Town to find him out", and when, to repeat Melbourne's words, "he don't stay long", we may be certain that he is too astute a diplomatist to

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 282. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 292. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 293.

create a scene because his advice is not followed. It is obvious that when party politics were brought to the fore in the matter of Albert's annuity, Stockmar bowed to the inevitable and bided his time. As the years passed he felt that he had perhaps made a mistake in not taking up the subject with Peel. He recorded in his diary:

"I did not venture, at that time, to enter into such negotiations on my own responsibility; but I have often asked myself since, whether matters would not have gone better, if I had on my own account broached the question with Sir Robert Peel." [1]

The debate in the House of Commons on 22, 24 and 27 January 1840 worried Stockmar. The discussions impressed him as reflecting the attempt of time-serving politicians to subordinate the interests of the Crown to their own selfish ends. He was disgusted. He knew that Melbourne was personally loyal to the Queen and this knowledge made him all the more displeased with the tactless blundering and intellectual torpidity of the Prime Minister. But his analysis of the situation as preserved in his journal, shows nothing of the rancour, the cynicism or the anger that would have been expected of a dyspeptic. He approached the problem from the angle of vision of a student of constitutional history and, discussing it with dispassionate objectivity, wrote:

"No party appears to me at the present moment to care about the injury inflicted upon the Crown. as such. The case is a new one, and probably of

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 345.

greater importance for the future, than for the present. The result has been brought about by an union between the Tories and the Radicals. . . . The Tories are in the highest degree embittered and their defeat in the last election . . . has probably intensified this bitterness. Only a feeling of this kind can have rendered them indifferent to the evident danger. . . . This is why I say that this vote (which reduced the annual allowance to £30,000) may possibly bear its worst fruit later on." [1]

In making this note, immediately after the division in the House of Commons, Stockmar had been under the impression that the result, which he deplored, had been brought about through an illicit union between the Tories and the Radicals. He soon discovered that the apathy of the Whigs made their good faith of negative value. He learnt that a number of the supporters of the Cabinet had, at the time of the vote, been seen walking about the streets. He mentioned the matter to the Prime Minister and preserved this memorandum of their conversation :

"As I was leaving the Palace I met Melbourne on the staircase. He took me aside, and used the following remarkable and true words, strongly characteristic of his great impartiality : 'The Prince will doubtless be much irritated against the Tories. But it is not the Tories alone whom the Prince has to thank for the curtailment of his appanage. It is the Tories, the Radicals, and a *good many of our own people*.' I said, 'There's an honest

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 346.

man.' I hope you will yourself say this to the Prince." [1]

We cannot agree with Stockmar's analysis of what was revealed to him by Melbourne. The outstanding deduction is not that the Prime Minister was impartial, but that he was spineless and that his sense of loyalty to the Queen was not worthy of the traditions of an English gentleman. It was his duty, as Victoria's trusted friend, as the leader of the party to which she had plighted herself, to fight her battle and not to allow Whigs to go gallivanting around town when a crucial division was impending. The impartiality shown in exculpating the Tories would have been worthy of commendation if Melbourne had begun by exerting himself in a manner consonant with true chivalry.

But when Stockmar made this memorandum on 6 February 1840, his greatest wish was that the hostile vote of the Commons should not embitter the Prince against the Tories and make a political partisan of him.[2] The Baron's fear was that the Whigs might have engineered matters with the deliberate purpose of indisposing Albert to their opponents and of widening the breach which existed between them and Victoria.[3] He was therefore so greatly relieved when Melbourne admitted that the supporters of the Ministry had been derelict, that his sense of proportion became slightly unhinged.

Albert was not in England when the Commons took their unfriendly decision. Stockmar was alive

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 346. [2] *Memoirs*, vol. II, p. 30.
[3] *Early Years*, p. 277.

to the strategic importance of having the Prince understand just what had occurred. He thought it was imperative that no party bias should add to the difficulties which were inherent in the task of sharing Victoria's responsibilities. He hastened to submit to Albert a correct and dispassionate view of what had taken place. It is quite probable that his conversation with Melbourne formed an excellent background to his narrative. And it was because he was so anxious to stress the non-political aspect of the vote that he was led to emphasize an impartiality which bordered on disloyalty.

It is difficult to say whether it was the deftness of Stockmar's touch or the innate common sense of the Prince—or both—which steered a way through the dangers lurking in that hostile vote. It is safe to say that Albert took the decision in the proper spirit. He refused to be angry. He was about to marry the most powerful Sovereign in the world and he had too much intellectual poise to become discontented with anybody or at anything. It is, however, a proof of his innate goodness of heart, or of the thoroughness of Stockmar's training—or, again, of both—that he afterwards said to the Baron that what pained him most in the matter was the restriction which would be imposed upon him in his efforts to do good and to assist poor artists and scholars.[1]

It was no sudden impulse which caused Stockmar to take such pains to insulate Albert from political partisanship. He loved and honoured the English

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 347.

Constitution from conviction. He said this, in these very words, in a letter written to the Prince on 25 January 1854.[1] He considered that one of the sheet-anchors of that bulwark of liberty was the utter aloofness of the Crown from factional controversies. It was not merely as a friend of Victoria and Albert and of England that he so resolutely defended the integrity of British institutions. It was also because as a citizen of the world he was convinced that the English Constitution "is the foundation, corner and cope-stone of the entire political civilization of the human race, present and to come".[2]

When the question of the Prince's precedence came up for consideration in Parliament, Stockmar did not forget the fate of the Cabinet's proposal to fix Albert's civil list at £50,000 a year. Leopold, the incorrigible Coburg, who in spite of his intellectual blinkers was a most far-seeing man, held that the Prince's position was, to all intents and purposes, that of a Queen Consort and that the same privileges should be attached to it as had been added to Queen Adelaide's rank.[3] Stockmar was not interested in theorizing. He desired to avoid complications, to get Albert happily married and to let the future take care of itself, without challenging the Whigs, the Tories or the Radicals.

Victoria's diaries show that no difficulties were apprehended on this score. The matter was taken in hand by the Ministry late in November 1839.

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 76 (note).
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Early Years*, p. 285.

It was decided to introduce a clause into the Naturalization Bill giving the Prince precedence immediately after the Queen. Victoria's uncles, the Dukes of Sussex and Cambridge, were sounded on the subject, and after some reluctance, gave their consent. The King of Hanover was more stubborn. He not only refused to agree but urged the Tories to oppose the measure. He even tried to set the Duke of Cambridge to recant.

None of these manœuvres escaped Stockmar's vigilance. But Melbourne preferred to go ahead. The Naturalization Bill came up before the Lords on 27 January 1840. It provided that " the Prince, for his life, was to take precedence in rank after Her Majesty, in Parliament and elsewhere, as Her Majesty may think fit and proper, any law to the contrary, notwithstanding ". The drafting of the measure had been faulty. A blunder of form had crept into it. An amendment corrected this defect, but Wellington, who was a Parliamentary tactician as well as a military strategist, moved that the debate be adjourned.

Lord Brougham brought up the artillery to support Wellington, holding that the Bill gave the Prince precedence over the heir apparent to England's throne. Lord Fitzgerald urged that they might and ought to grant Albert priority over the rest of the Royal Family, but never over a Prince of Wales. Greville summed up the situation when he wrote that the general view was : " the Queen's Consort might walk in front of his wife's uncles, but must walk behind his own eldest son ".[1]

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 117.

The Ministry introduced a rider to answer this objection. It failed to satisfy the opposition, in that it gave a new orientation to their attacks. Stockmar saw that all these objections were but phases of party manœuvring. His sense of fairness told him, however, that Melbourne's original text and even its amendatory provisions were open to criticism. He realized that, as the result of bad political generalship, the whole subject had become pregnant with disagreeable possibilities and that it was quite probable that the Bill would eventually be defeated in the Upper House.

Matters were further complicated by the fact that the Queen wanted to have the Prince's name introduced into the Liturgy. There was a division of opinion in the Cabinet itself in regard to the legality of the proposal, but the majority were disposed to do what she desired. It was decided, however, to consult the Archbishop of Canterbury. The opinion was that the Sovereign had not the Power to make the insertion.[1]

This decision, coming as it did at a time when the question of the Prince's precedence was still in abeyance, irritated Victoria. Melbourne sought to placate the Tories by appealing to Wellington.[2] In other words, he showed a willingness to act on the suggestion that Stockmar had advanced when the subject of Albert's civil list had been up for discussion. The Prime Minister had then refrained from following the Baron's advice. The success which the Opposition had had on the former occa-

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 119.
[2] *Ibid.*

sion emboldened the Duke to stand by his guns. Greville writes that:

"Melbourne found him (Wellington) with one of his very stiffest crotchets in his head, determined only to give the Prince precedence after the Royal Family; and all he could get from him was, that it would be *unjust* to do more. All argument was unavailing, and he left him on Saturday evening without having been able to make any impression on him, or to move him by a representation of the Queen's feelings; . . . for the Queen had already descended from her high horse and would have been content to accept precedence for her own life, and saving the rights of the Prince of Wales." [1]

Wellington's attitude was reported to Victoria—but not by the discreet Stockmar. She was so incensed that she said that she would not invite the Duke to her wedding. It is true that later she was induced to alter this decision when it was hinted to her that if Wellington were not there, there might be some unpleasant manifestations of public opinion. But the Queen was so outraged that before yielding to pressure she assured Lord Lyndhurst: "I won't have that Old Rebel." [2]

With Victoria in such a frame of mind, with Wellington and the Tories so determined "to carry their point that they made a grand whip up, and brought Lord Clare all the way from Grimsthorpe, to vote against the Government," [3] and with Melbourne intellectually flabby, constitutionally languid and temperamentally hesitant, Stockmar

[1] *Ibid.* [2] *Ibid.*, p. 117. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

saw that the situation called for his active intervention. He has left this report of how he met the emergency :

"I now went to Melbourne and found him doubtful and irresolute. I said to him, 'For God's sake withdraw your bill and do not allow yourself to be beaten a second time. This would have the very worst effect possible.' He answered, 'That, I fully believe ; but the Queen lays the greatest possible stress upon the matter.' I replied, 'Be only firm and prove to Her Majesty the evil results that would follow from a second discomfiture.'" [1]

Stockmar was not the type of man to offer such a suggestion unless he were prepared to follow it up with a remedy. He would never have broached this subject to a man as indolent and irresolute as Melbourne if he had not foreseen not only the drift of the conversation but its outcome. His journal thus reveals that :

"He (the Prime Minister) answered 'Yes ; but what is to happen next ?' 'Settle the matter of precedence,' I said, 'by an Order in Council, as the Regent did in the case of Prince Leopold.' I went home and copied out for Melbourne the words which the Regent had used in 1826 to settle the rank of Prince Leopold, and sent them to him." [2]

It is a matter of record that the question was adjusted according to this idea. Melbourne deleted from the Bill the clause which dealt with precedence, so that the measure was passed as an Act of Naturalization. A few months later the

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 349. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 350.

controversial point was determined by the royal prerogative or, as Greville puts it :

"The Government resolved to withdraw the clause, and they did so, thus leaving the Prince without any specific place assigned by Parliament, and it remains with the Queen to do what she can for him, or for courtesy, tacit consent and deference for her Consort to give him the precedence virtually which the House of Lords refuses to bestow formally." [1]

Looking back across the years, it is difficult to estimate what might not have been the outcome of the conflict born of the tenacity of a determined young Queen who was desperately in love and of the stubbornness of the "Old Rebel" who had "one of his very stiffest crotchets in his head", if the soothing influence of Stockmar had not been there to save the day. Melbourne obviously did not measure up to the emergency. The memoirs of Silvain Van de Weyer, Leopold's Minister to London, explain why it was that the Baron was able to play so important a part in England's history at that critical juncture.

"How is it," asks this diplomatist, speaking at a later date but putting a question which applies just as well to 1840, "that Stockmar had such a permanent influence upon men so different in so many respects as Lord Aberdeen, Lord Melbourne, the Duke of Wellington, Lord Palmerston, Sir Robert Peel, etc.?" [2] He answers the inquiry. It was not only because they recognized Stockmar's

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 119.

[2] Quoted in *The Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 78.

great ability and perfect disinterestedness, but because they all felt that they were in safe hands. They knew that he would never betray them, show up their foibles or accentuate their faults. They were certain that he would not play off one politician against another, join in any backstair intrigue or avail himself of his position to undermine them in the opinion of the Sovereign or the public.

Stockmar himself explained the secret of his success. He held that if a man is consulted by anyone whose consideration he prizes, he should give his opinion truthfully and boldly, without reserve or reticence. He added, "should your opinion not be palatable, do not, to please or conciliate him, deviate for a moment from what you think the truth. You may in consequence be some time out of favour, treated with neglect or coldness; and when they come back (for back they will come if you remain honest and firm) never complain of the treatment you have received, never try to make them own how right you were, and how wrong they have been".[1]

We may be certain that it was because Stockmar applied these principles that Melbourne and Wellington, not to speak of Victoria and Albert, allowed him to solve the problem of precedence. He had it more or less in hand, when the Prince returned to England on 6 February 1840. The Baron knew that he had done his duty by the young man who had made him his mandatory, but he was by no means certain that Albert would have the suppleness of intellect and strength of character to face

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 78.

the contentious spirit unleashed by all these party bickerings revolving around questions of civil list, precedence and liturgy.

It had been Stockmar's hope that the Queen's romance would quell the strife which the Bedchamber incident had fanned into such a threat to the Crown. But he found that the marriage only served to create discontent. The task which confronted Albert was greater than had been expected; but Stockmar, ever an optimist in spite of his hypochondria, faced the future with confidence in the Prince's nobility of soul and urbanity of disposition—and in his own ability to apply, in case of need, the necessary resiliency of mind and tenacity of purpose.

On 9 February 1840 Victoria spent what she called her "last unmarried evening".[1] She dined at eight o'clock. "The dinner was just the same as the day before, with the exception of Lord Albemarle, Lord Erroll, Lord Byron, Col. Grey and Stockmar."[2] Two days after the great event the Baron felt justified in noting that "the Prince gives satisfaction".[3] On 20 February 1840 he was more specific and recorded that: "the impartial are well pleased with him; he has been even better than was to be expected. He behaves in his difficult position very well."[4]

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. II, p. 318. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 351. [4] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER IX

THE ROYAL HONEYMOON

ALBERT became Victoria's Consort at a critical moment. Troublesome questions abounded in England. International problems were both numerous and complicated.

There had been bad harvests since 1836. They had caused the price of foodstuffs to soar while industry languished and trade became stagnant. Pauperism assumed alarming proportions. Hard times begat agitators who appealed to the passions of the discontented and brought about risings in widely scattered areas.

Bad as were conditions in England, Scotland and Wales, they were worse in Ireland. What are euphemistically called agrarian outrages were there repeated with startling regularity. Canada was in a sullen mood. The West Indian colonies were a source of unending anxiety. And, to add to these worries, there was the perennial Eastern Question which in 1840 entered a phase that seemed to spell war with France.

The apprehensions due to conditions in Great Britain and abroad were intensified by the circumstance that since 1836 the national budget had not been balanced. The annual deficit rose in 1840 to £1,400,000. This figure would mean nothing to-

day, but at that time it assumed portentous proportions. It became obvious that 1841 would be an even worse year and by-elections and dwindling majorities in Parliament foretold that the days of the Cabinet were numbered.

Melbourne read the writing on the wall. With a candour and loyalty which do him honour he felt it to be his duty to prepare the way for the advent of his political opponents by diminishing, as far as possible, the antipathy between the Queen and the Tories. He had to combat the self-assertiveness of a determined young woman and, the ill will of a self-opinionated old man. As early as 20 February 1840 Stockmar noted in his diary :

"Melbourne told me that he had already expressed to the Prince his opinion that the Court ought to take advantage of the present moment to treat all parties, especially the Tories, in the spirit of a general amnesty".[1] The *Early Years* show that the Prime Minister repeated this sentiment to the Queen, saying to her : "You should now hold out the olive branch a little."[2]

While it was gratifying to Stockmar to know that Melbourne had mentioned to the Prince so important a topic as the necessity of treating "all parties, especially the Tories, in the spirit of a general amnesty", the Baron's preliminary survey of the field did not convince him that Albert was in a position to further so laudable an end. Politically, a Prince Consort is a cipher. The British Constitution, in its manifold ramifications, assigns to him no part in its structure. It makes his attributes

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 315. [2] *Early Years*, p. 328.

purely decorative and his functions exclusively procreative. Yet it was obvious to Stockmar that if the olive branch was to be held out to Her Majesty's opposition, it was Albert and nobody else who could or would extend it.

To make matters worse, all signs indicated that while the Queen was blindly in love with the Prince, she was, if possible, even more enamoured of her royal prerogative. She knew that sooner or later she would be forced to abdicate in favour of Albert and "to love, honour and obey him", as she had promised at the altar. But her congenital stubbornness and her inborn tenacity of purpose caused her to assert as frequently as possible the primacy which she knew would slip away from her.

Stockmar, with a German's conception of the relations between man and wife, probably considered that Albert should be in the ascendant, even if Victoria was Queen. But he looked at their relations from another angle—that of the welfare of Victoria herself. He felt that her political partisanship, her blind hatred of the Tories would jeopardize her Crown if Albert proved unequal to the task of persuading her to forget factional preferences and remember that she was the Queen of a nation and not of the Whigs. Urged on by the need of putting a curb on Victoria's party vindictiveness, he set to work to get the Prince to assert his personality, "not that he loved Cæsar less but that he loved Rome more".

Several difficulties confronted the Baron in this self-imposed task. One was that Albert did not have enough energy of mind and character to cope

with the resolute Victoria. Another was that the young Consort was first and foremost a Coburg. He wrote to his grandmother, shortly after his betrothal that "I am and shall remain a true German, Coburger and Gothaner".[1] Stockmar saw the need of cooling down such sentiments before grooming the Prince to become the bulwark of the British Constitution. And, last but not least, was the Queen's dependence on Baroness Lehzen, that "dearest of friends", who was so adroit and so ambitious that she refused to accept an official position at Court, but always kept within sight of her royal mistress when all her Ministers and courtiers and ladies-in-waiting had left her—even when she was on her honeymoon.

We do not know just when Albert first recognized that Victoria was treating him as a pet whom she loved and fondled, but to whom she refused her confidence. It is quite probable that the Ides of March had come and gone before he began to long for recognition of his intellectual existence. One thing is certain—before May Day 1840 he had already let the Prime Minister know that he had been deeply hurt by the Queen's neglect and her want of trust in him. He apparently did not ask that he should be permitted to control the foreign politics of England, as Leopold no doubt wanted him to do. What cut him to the quick was that he was dealt with just as if he were a cipher whose sole duty was to beget an heir to the Crown.

The minutes of a conversation between Anson (the Prince's Private Secretary), Melbourne and

[1] *Early Years*, p. 424.

Stockmar give a clear insight into Albert's mind on 28 May 1840. It is there recorded that the Prime Minister said :

"I have spoken to the Queen, who says the Prince complains of a want of confidence on trivial matters, and on matters connected with the politics of this country. She said it proceeded entirely from indolence ; she knew it was wrong, but when she was with the Prince she preferred talking upon other subjects. I told Her Majesty that she should try and alter this, and that there was no objection to her conversing with the Prince upon any subject she pleased." [1]

Women are seldom entirely frank. Their reticence adds to their charm. Their secretiveness makes them more attractive. Their defence of their privacy, being instinctive, lends grace to their naturalness. Melbourne was essentially a man of the world and a specialist in reading the mind of women.[2] He knew that while Victoria had told him the truth when she said that she preferred to talk with Albert on subjects other than politics, she had not told the whole truth when she gave this as the explanation of her attitude. She let fall something which caused him to inform Anson and Stockmar that "she thinks that domestic harmony is more likely to follow from avoiding subjects likely to create difference".[3]

Such subtle reasoning was not in harmony with Victoria's way of thinking. It savoured of

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 224. [2] That he sometimes overplayed his hand is explained on page 80.

[3] *Ibid.*

extraneous influences. Melbourne suggested that he did not consider that the Baroness—meaning Lehzen—was the cause of her regrettable want of openness. This remark prompted Stockmar to retort that "the Queen is influenced more than she is aware of by the Baroness. In consequence of that influence she is not so ingenuous as she was two years ago." [1]

If Stockmar was satisfied that the Baroness Lehzen was interfering in the domestic life of the young couple, and if he considered that as long as her influence remained paramount it would be difficult for him to eradicate that petty vindictiveness which made Victoria hate the Tories, he was far too prudent to take up the cudgels against "dearest" Lehzen. On the contrary, he said:

"The Queen has not started upon a right principle. She should, by degrees, impart everything to him (Albert), but there is danger in his wishing it all at once. A case may be laid before him; he may give some crude and unformed opinion; the opinion may be taken and the result disastrous, and a forcible argument is thus raised against advice being asked for in the future." [2]

Stockmar's innate caution dictated these words. He recognized all the dangerous potentialities latent in Lehzen's power as the Queen's *éminence grise*. But he considered that the primary question, at that moment, was not so much to eradicate her influence or even to curb it, as to obviate an inopportune intervention by the Prince.

It was possibly Stockmar's medical training

[1] *Ibid.* [2] *Ibid.*

which guided him in insisting that the paramount duty of those who had Victoria's interests at heart was to make haste slowly. Lehzen was undoubtedly a disturbing factor, made all the more so because she worked behind the scenes and had so enduring a place in the Queen's heart. But Stockmar's clinical experience and diplomatic training told him that the major consideration, in those crucial days of May 1840, was to hold the Prince in reserve and to keep Lehzen under observation until nature solved the problem of giving Albert the same place in Victoria's mind that he had in her heart.

That there is nothing far-fetched about this deduction is shown by the dual fact that the conversation between Anson, Melbourne and Stockmar occured on 28 May 1840 and that the Baron's *Denkwürdigkeiten* say that "towards the middle of the year, the prospect that the Prince's position would become more assured was afforded by the hope of an heir".[1] The expression "towards the middle of the year" is quite vague and does not prove that Stockmar knew what was what when this conversation took place. His journal entry, dated 10 June 1840, is, however, quite explicit and shows that he was not groping in the dark when he advocated a policy of extreme prudence. It reads:

"As soon as the doctors can announce to the Ministers the state of the Queen, with a probability bordering on certainty, the latter must lay before Parliament a Regency Bill to meet the possibility of the Queen dying, and having a minor as her heir."[2]

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 351. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 352.

If it was the Baron's hospital training which had caused him to think of matters of State, and of the relations between Victoria, Albert and Lehzen in terms of pathology, it was as a statesman that he met the issue. He had not forgotten what had happened when the Whigs had made a party measure of the question of the Prince's annuity and his precedence. He made up his mind that this Regency Bill was not going to be bungled in the same way. He determined that if need be he would stand up against Victoria and Melbourne and not permit them to blunder a third time. He was resolved, if driven to the wall, to be "cruel, only to be kind". He expressed this decision as follows:

"My plan would be to act upon a full understanding with the Opposition. I don't know what the Queen and the Ministry will think of this plan. But when I call to mind the course matters took in regard to the annuity, and the question of the Prince's precedence, I feel almost inclined to act on my own responsibility." [1]

There was nothing inchoate about the steps which Stockmar contemplated taking. Not only was he determined to remove the Regency Bill from the domain of party politics, but he had worked out its terms. There were, as he viewed the matter, only two alternatives: the Prince should be Regent either without or with a Council. He did not expect to carry through his plan without encountering stout opposition. He foresaw that the Dukes of Cumberland, Cambridge and Sussex, not wishing to be passed over, would 'endeavour

[1] *Ibid.*

to put a spoke in the wheel, the former by means of the ultra-Tories, the latter through the ultra-Liberals".[1]

Stockmar's diary does not tell what he did between 18 June and 26 June 1840. He was not idle—that much is certain, because he recorded, on the latter date, that "I have communicated twice with Sir Robert Peel respecting the Regency Bill".[2] Did he do so with Melbourne's approval? It is reasonable to assume that he did, because the Whigs were then in political hot water and the Prime Minister had already spoken to Albert about the desirability of treating "all parties, especially the Tories, in the spirit of a general amnesty". Did Victoria agree "to hold out the Olive Branch a little" as Melbourne had suggested? It is impossible to say. She was pregnant in June 1840, and when a woman is in that state she does not always act logically.

Stockmar began these negotiations with Peel by informing him that the matter would be taken up at the end of the session and, as unanimity was most important, it was very desirable that his opinion should be known. The Tory leader was too much of a politician to commit himself. He owed a duty to his followers and this tied his tongue. But, though he was very guarded, he was also very friendly because his relations with Stockmar were such that he sympathized with the spirit which had prompted the suggestion.

The Baron's visit bore fruit two days later. Peel sent him word, through Lord Liverpool, that there

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 352. [2] *Ibid.*

was an intrigue afoot among the Radicals for the purpose of setting up the Duke of Sussex as Co-Regent. With this information came the assurance that Peel's advice to the Prince was to remain perfectly quiet and passive, as care would be taken that no harm should come to Albert from that side.[1]

It soon became obvious that a woman was urging the Duke of Sussex to assert his claims. The Duchess of Gloucester was encouraging him. Stockmar knew too much of human nature to expect this opposition to be withdrawn. His strategy was devoted to emphasizing its purely personal aspect by drowning it in a general chorus of approval of Albert's selection as sole Regent. The result of his tactics was that the Bill met with no opposition in either House except that of the irreconcilable Duke. The Duchess had no vote.

It may seem far fetched to attribute this practically unanimous approval to the work of one man, particularly when he was a foreigner. But it is the Prince, himself, who wrote to his father, the Duke of Coburg, on 24 July 1840 :

" An affair of the greatest importance to me will be settled in a few days. I mean the Regency Bill. . . . There has been much trouble to carry the matter through, for all sorts of intrigues were at work, and had not Stockmar gained the Opposition for the Ministers, it might well have ended as did the £50,000. There was not a word of opposition in the House of Lords except from the Duke of Sussex." [2]

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 354.

[2] *Early Years*, p. 351.

It appears that the irreconcilable Duke and the implacable Duchess saw that their opposition was making them ridiculous. When the measure came up before the Lords for its third reading they disappeared. The extent of Stockmar's triumph is shown by a letter which the Prince wrote on 2 August 1840 in which he said that not only had the Regency Bill gone safely through all its stages, but that "it is very gratifying that not a single voice was raised in opposition in either House, or in any of the newspapers".[1]

We have already seen that Melbourne had said of Stockmar, "I am always ready to see him, he is such a very clever man, and he don't stay long." The Baron saw that the passage of this Regency Bill gave him a golden opportunity to prove that the Prime Minister was justified in saying "he don't stay long". He wrote in his journal on 11 July 1840, when it was clear that the Duke of Sussex and the Duchess of Gloucester were defeated: "With this act my business here is for the present, and perhaps for ever, at an end. How much or how little I have been of use, it is not for me to determine. But I can at least say, that I have not committed a single blunder, and this is always a satisfaction to a man in my years."[2]

Stockmar left England on 3 August 1840, but not without a pressing invitation from Victoria and Albert to return in November, when the Queen expected her confinement.[3] His farewell letter to the Prince has a fatherly note: "keep watch over

[1] *Early Years*, p. 352. [2] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 357.
[3] *Ibid.*

the *moral* and *physical* health of the Queen. Never lose self-possession or patience; but above all, at no time, and in no way, fail in *princely worth and nobleness.*" [1]

The ties of affection and respect which linked Albert and Stockmar were too close to be severed during the months of their separation. They maintained an active correspondence which assumed a far more personal tone than that of the Baron's letter written on board ship. We have already noted that Stockmar's sense of proportion and of perspective was exceptional. He diagnosed, rather than merely analysed, all matters upon which he passed judgment. He learnt to draw a sharp line of demarcation between essentials and details. He was thus able to conserve his energy and avoid dissipating it in ferreting out unimportant trivialities. It was for this reason that he wrote the Prince on 13 September 1840:

"In reference to the Duchy of Cornwall, in what you do I advise you to avoid going too deep into details, which will only bewilder you. It is for you, to give the impulse merely, to establish sound principles, and, this once done, to hold fast in everybody's despite to those principles with steel-like sternness." [2]

Five days before driving home this lesson, which was of special importance to Albert, whose German upbringing was apt to cause him to associate thoroughness with minutiæ, Stockmar counselled the Prince to bear in mind that a reputation for

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 90.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

cordial courteousness is, for royalty, not merely a great advantage but also proof of a fine disposition.

We fear that the Baron failed to drive home this message. It was, perhaps, because, in as much as he was a Teuton, his conception of what he called "cordial courteousness" did not dovetail with an Englishman's appreciation of easy manners.

If Stockmar had perceived this eccentricity he would, no doubt, have attempted to correct it. He did not realize that while Albert's manners were correct from the German point of view, they were gauche to Londoners. He overlooked this aspect of the Prince's intercourse with the English because he was utterly oblivious of its significance, just as Albert had been of the necessity of having proper dinner clothes in his portmanteau when he reached Windsor on 10 October 1839.

CHAPTER X

MELBOURNE RESIGNS

WHEN the autumn leaves were falling, Stockmar returned to London at the urgent request of Albert, who wanted to have him at hand during Victoria's confinement—not as a physician but as a friend. All England was then praying for a boy. Stockmar seems to have taken it for granted that the nation's prayers would be answered, for on 1 October 1840 he wrote to the Prince that the selection of a nurse was a matter of the greatest moment "for a man's education begins the first day of his life, and a lucky choice I regard as the greatest gift we can bestow on the expected stranger".[1]

Providence decreed that Stockmar should be compelled to wait a little before attempting to form the character of the Prince of Wales. Shortly after the birth of the Princess Royal, Stockmar remarked, "the nursery gives me more trouble than the Government of a kingdom would do".[2] But he did not remain very long at Buckingham Palace in control of such domestic details. He returned to Coburg early in 1841. He had seen enough to convince him that motherhood had

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 97.
[2] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 358.

made Victoria far more appreciative of Albert's intellect and far less dependent upon Lehzen. He was also well satisfied with the development of the Prince's character.

Stockmar had not the easy disposition which feels that if the trend of events is in the right direction success is assured. He had set his heart on a very high ideal for Albert, and his absence from England did not interfere with the continuance of his self-imposed task. His letters, while encouraging Albert by his sympathy and approval, stressed the necessity of self-discipline and perseverance. The frankness of this correspondence is remarkable. What Stockmar wrote on 7 May 1841 is typical of his sincerity and of his common sense.

"Your early education, my dear Prince," he wrote, "as well as your youth, has hitherto tended to generate in you a certain tendency, which from this hour forth I am bent on overcoming. It is the tendency to close the ear of the understanding to the most convincing propositions whenever you are possessed by impulses and predilections for men and things which spring from mistaken or perverted feeling. This tendency, which on a close self-scrutiny you will find to be the result either of weakness or vanity, should, because of its very origin, be most strenuously subdued. The same defect too often leads your Royal Highness, even in matters of moment, to rest satisfied with mere *talk* where *action* is alone appropriate and can alone be of any value." [1]

Albert was fortunate in having in Stockmar a

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 104.

friend "to hold, as 't were, the mirror up to nature". The quality of his frankness was "twice blesst" for it might have been said of it that "it blesseth him that gives and him that takes". Stockmar's disinterested benevolence is unquestionable, but few young men married to the world's most powerful ruler and beginning to feel that her sceptre was his would have accepted such a lecture.

One of the reasons why Albert was so docile was because soothing syrup was usually administered to take the sting out of admonitions. But it was not over-sweet. The letter which has just been referred to closes with this paragraph:

"A judgment so sound as yours should always be able to keep down whatever is false or mistaken in sentiment. . . . Well do I know that the solution of this task can only be the fruit of resolute self-control, and is therefore neither soon nor easily attainable; but I know just as surely that it is worthy of you, and that it is within the power of your mind to achieve, and that, unless achieved, it is idle to hope for any genuine triumph for you as a man or as a Prince." [1]

This letter was prompted by the exigencies of the English political situation. A ministerial crisis was then clearly discernible on the horizon. Stockmar desired that Albert should assert his personality in order to solve it in a manner befitting the interests of the Crown. He dreaded the possibility of the Whigs being defeated on a test vote before the Prince's influence over the Queen had made her amenable to reason and sufficiently tractable to

[1] *Ibid.*

co-operate loyally with the Tories. This was the reason why he argued so strongly against Albert being " possessed by impulses and predilections for men and things ".

Before the Baron had left England the Prime Minister had told him that the Cabinet was exposed to all kinds of perils and that it might be overthrown at any moment. Stockmar therefore impressed on Albert the need of establishing contact with both Melbourne and Peel so that the unfortunate bedchamber incident would not recur if the retirement of the Whigs become inevitable. He worked out the details of the Prince's strategy, which was that in the event of a change of Cabinet the Duchesses of Bedford and Sutherland and Lady Normanby would retire of their own accord from the bedchamber. Such a procedure did not involve a repudiation of the principles for which Victoria had contended in 1839 and it brought about in effect the result the Tories desired—the removal of Whig partisanship from the Queen's environment.

Not content with evolving this very practical plan of campaign and with having persuaded Albert that the Prince himself had suggested it,[1] Stockmar incorporated in a letter dated 18 May 1841 these admirable principles of English constitutional law :

" If things come to a change of Ministry, then the great maxim, irrefragably one and the same for all Ministers, is this, viz. The Crown supports frankly, honourably and with all its might, the Ministry of the time, whatever it be, so long as it

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 106.

commands a majority, and governs with integrity for the welfare and advancement of the country. A King who, as a Constitutional King, either cannot or will not carry this maxim into practice, deliberately descends from the lofty pedestal on which the Constitution has placed him to the lower one of a mere party chief." [1]

These rules of conduct, however commendable they may be, were applicable not to a mere Prince Consort but to a ruling Sovereign. Stockmar hastened to give them a personal note by adding :

" Be you, therefore, the Constitutional genius of the Queen ; do not content yourself with merely whispering this maxim in her ear when circumstances serve, but strive also to carry it out into practice at the right time and by the worthiest means. A man can always accomplish what is right if he set himself resolutely to do so. It is essential that we all help, according to our means, to build up a solid and well-merited reputation for you." [2]

The Prince took kindly to the idea of being " the Constitutional genius of the Queen ". He whispered Stockmar's maxims in Victoria's ears so opportunely that,[3] when the inevitable happened on 28 August 1841 and at five in the morning the Ministers found themselves in a minority of 91 in a House of 629 members, Victoria was no longer a blindly partisan Whig.

But if Albert, from the vantage point of his position as a father, was able to triumph over the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 110. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 111.
[3] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 359.

Victoria who had formerly been dominated by "dearest" Lehzen, there had been moments during the electoral campaign which preceded Melbourne's defeat when Stockmar feared that the Prince himself might be caught in the maelstrom of party politics. In the course of the debate on the Sugar Duties, the issue between the Ministry and their critics had been one of Free Trade versus Protection. Lord John Russell and Palmerston supported Cobden's tenets and urged the total abolition of the Corn Laws. As late as 1839 Melbourne had said in Parliament that "the repeal of the Corn Laws would be the most insane proposition that had ever entered the human head". This statement was recalled to Stockmar when the Prince informed him of the issue upon which the Whigs had decided to go to the country.

The Baron was a convinced Free Trader. His *Denkwürdigkeiten* contain this unequivocal pronouncement:

"For the world of commerce and industry I expect great things from the time we live in, which is sure to bring very shortly certain principles to maturity. The truth that all commerce should be free will come to be generally recognized, and the altered views of their people will make it possible for governments to give reality and substance to such commercial treaties as they conclude." [1]

Stockmar believed in the ultimate and not far distant triumph of Free Trade, but he felt that the success of great political changes depends on their

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 368.

being instigated at the right time by the right people. He considered the moment was not opportune for the victory of Tariff Reform and that Melbourne's pronouncement proved that the Whigs were not the right people to espouse the cause.

The Baron, like most men of his generation who advocated Free Trade, had the enthusiasm of a neophyte. He took his championship of its principles most seriously, and proclaimed them on all possible occasions. It is likely that he had urged them on the Prince when they were travelling through Italy, finding in the multiple customs barriers and *dazio* restrictions which abounded in that land—then merely a geographical expression—many examples to drive home his points. Now that Albert had become Victoria's Consort and had undertaken to become "the constitutional genius of the Queen", he feared that these lessons might have a far greater effect than he had contemplated. Not recanting an iota of his faith in his economic tenets, he considered it of paramount importance that Albert should not be carried away by any of the passions roused by the fierce political struggle which was imminent in England.

Stockmar was sent for as soon as Peel took office. He called on Melbourne and learnt that the nation was perfectly satisfied with the way in which the change of Ministry had been effected. "It is different now from what it was two years ago," observed the retired statesman, only to add, "I am now strong enough to be magnanimous." [1] The stress which the Whig leader laid on his own

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 360.

attitude must have appealed to the Baron's sense of humour. Melbourne obviously overlooked the fact that matters had been so badly bungled in 1839 because Albert had not then been at hand to guide Victoria and because Stockmar's presence in Italy had made it impossible for anyone to counteract that spirit of intolerance which Lehzen's Hanoverian principles had fanned in the breast of her pupil.

While Stockmar was not a courtier who worshipped at the shrine of the rising sun, he had too keen a sense of the realities of life not to get into immediate touch with the new Prime Minister. His relations with Peel were already so close that no preliminary spade-work was necessary. Lord Liverpool, a moderate Tory who is described as "a very amiable, intelligent and thoroughly honourable and trustworthy man",[1] felt called upon, nevertheless, to see Peel and explain that the Baron "was a species of second parent to the Queen and the Prince" whose only object was their welfare and whose sole ambition was to be of service to them.[2]

Liverpool wrote to Stockmar on 7 October 1841, submitting a full report on what the Tory statesman had said at their interview. The final paragraph of his letter brings out quite clearly what an exceptional position Stockmar occupied in England during those epoch-making years. After having pointed out that Peel welcomed the opportunity of conferring frequently with Stockmar, Liverpool

[1] *Memoirs of Baron Stockmar*, vol. II, p. 52 (note).
[2] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 361.

concluded: "if you would come to him at any time, and be candid and explicit with him, you might depend upon his frankness and discretion; that, above all, if you said anything to him and expressed a desire that it might not be communicated, even to the Duke of Wellington (that was his expression) that he wished me to assure you that your wishes should be strictly attended to".[1]

Seven days after the date of this letter Stockmar, who was then in England, recorded that he had confidence in Peel's statesmanship. He did not look on the Tory Prime Minister, however, as being a man of outstanding ability; he judged Peel to be somewhat lacking in self-confidence and yet not placing sufficient trust in others.[2] "A man who has been often taken in," noted the Baron about this time, "becomes naturally distrustful."[3] But viewing all matters primarily from the point of view of the welfare of Victoria and Albert and concentrating his attention principally upon the maintenance of the aloofness of the Throne from party politics, he made this significant entry on 14 October 1841:

"I should consider him (Peel), therefore, better fitted for quiet than stormy times; anyhow he will, in a far higher degree than his predecessor, be Prime Minister in the true sense of the word, and placing the confidence I do in his honesty, I hope that the Royal prerogative will be far better maintained by him than by Melbourne."[4]

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 362. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 361. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 363.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 362.

Convinced as he was of Peel's fundamental good faith, and satisfied that the Throne would not be used by him for party purposes, Stockmar was sorry to learn that the Tory leader did not believe that he possessed the confidence of the Queen " to the extent which he wishes and requires ", but the knowledge did not distress him. It gratified him to see that the relations between Albert and Peel were upon a most excellent basis. He looked upon this fact as indicating that Victoria's cold reserve towards the Cabinet would thaw under the influence of the warm friendship between the Prince and the Prime Minister.

During those months when Albert was weaning Victoria from her Whig partisanship and nullifying Lehzen's occult influence, Stockmar's thoughts were divided between England and Belgium. He was far too prudent a man to seek to hasten matters. He made no attempt to convince, much less to persuade Victoria what she should do. She was so enamoured of Albert during their entire married life that when their youth lent emphasis to the maxim that " self-perpetuation is the second law of nature ", she was either with child or awaiting her recovery from confinement in order again to become pregnant.

The Baron's clinical experience told him that it would not be the part of wisdom for him to seek to intrude his views upon a Queen who was doing so much to propagate the human species. He felt that he could hardly expect to cope with Lehzen under such conditions. What he did was to concentrate his attention on Albert and allow " the

constitutional genius of the Queen" to make itself felt more and more and applied to divorce the Crown from politics.

While this important phase in the development of the English Constitution was going on—important not in the sense that it changed the Prince Consort from a cipher into a dominant factor, but because it placed the Throne on the lofty pedestal where it belongs—Stockmar was vitally interested in foreign politics. He did not, like Leopold, seek to make of England a tail to the Coburg kite. He looked at matters from a wider angle.

He had noted in his diary, just before Melbourne fell, that even if France were right in what was then known as the Egyptian Question, "that it was worth-while to show her that her dictatorship would not be tolerated, and that Europe is not afraid of M. Thiers when he takes to playing the part of Napoleon".[1]

In the more or less involved matter of the Spanish marriages Stockmar saw eye to eye with Victoria. She, woman-like, wanted to be a match-maker, and because Coburg blood coursed through her veins she desired to have Spain's Queen marry a Coburg. Even before she became England's Sovereign she had inquired of her "beloved uncle Leopold", on 6 February 1837, if he knew "what sort of people are about poor little Queen Isabel, and if she is being *well* or *ill* brought up?"[2] And when she was a mother and more than ever interested in finding a Consort for "poor little

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 364.

[2] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 62.

Queen Isabel", she had Albert write to Lord Aberdeen that: "the Queen thinks it right that you should inform Lord Howard that the possibility of a marriage between Pince Leopold and the Queen of Spain has been for some time a favourite thought of hers and mine and that you thought that this combination had some advantages which hardly any other could offer".[1]

Stockmar's writings show that he fully approved of this view. He said in one of his letters that:

"They write to me that the husband of Queen Isabella must be a Bourbon, because the French choose to have it so, and that in this respect also Guizot's hand will be forced. The incurable French. It is always the old story; we choose to have this, and it must be. Then come the impossibilities and they get violent like children, are treated like children, and at last when they have spent their rage and fury, they are themselves glad that their wishes have come to nothing."[2]

In the years 1840–2 Belgium's status was assailed as a result of the negotiations respecting a customs union entered into by that kingdom with France. Stockmar saw in the project great political dangers for the independence of Belgium. "Time alone can bring roses", he wrote; "time alone can make Belgium's commercial classes more intelligent, more capable and more adroit. Time alone can moderate France's mania for customs barriers. Markets such as the Belgians dream of for their over-production, do not exist, and if they did,

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 485.

[2] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 365.

they would, in a few years, cease to be of any use. Not only men, but whole nations are subject to fixed ideas." [1]

Stockmar cordially disliked the French long before 1870 had created a new German mentality. He considered, in 1841, that France was then scheming with Holland to wipe Belgium off the map. This excerpt taken from his correspondence brings out his point of view :

" The intrigues of the French Minister at The Hague, and the ostensible demonstrations of the French Cabinet towards the Dutch, formed the starting point of the Dutch, Belgian and French complications. The sudden friendship of Louis Philippe and Guizot dazed the King of Holland and excited in him and his entourage the idea of a restoration. France in 1830 hardly accepted in good faith the creation of the independent Kingdom of Belgium. Unable to hinder what others were doing, she consented to what they did, with the *arrière pensée* that it would after all prove but a scaffolding which would soon collapse." [2]

In a letter dated 21 December 1841, Stockmar explained that in judging Louis Philippe he took into account that Ruler's position as a King and his character as a Frenchman. In approaching this question the Baron held that the treaties of peace of 1814–15 were dictated by conquerors filled with a sense of their superiority. He detected in them traces of arrogance, and expressed no surprise that the French should desire to shake off these trammels. He held that " owing to this

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 368. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 370.

circumstance and to the revolution of 1830, Louis Philippe as King is placed in a cross fire". And elaborating this postulate he went on to write that:

"On the one side *Europe* dictates to him (Louis Philippe) peace as the only means of maintaining himself and his dynasty. On the other side *France* dictates to him war, as the only means of shaking off intolerable treaties. Louis Philippe places more confidence than he ought in his own wisdom and adroitness. Talleyrand has said to him, 'You must not make war; but you must avail yourself of any crisis, in order, without war, to modify the treaties and adapt them to the interests of France. You have to fear cannon shots, but there is no necessity whatever to fear the appearance of war or warlike complications which, little by little, and by mere protocols, may be smoothed down again.'"[1]

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 372.

CHAPTER XI

VICTORIANISM

ALTHOUGH Stockmar followed the international politics of the day with close attention, his warmest sympathies were devoted to the welfare of Victoria and Albert. He delighted in their domestic happiness, and it was with feelings of pride and pleasure that he wrote on 12 October 1841 that "the Prince improves morally and politically. I can say with truth that I love him like my son and that he deserves it." [1] A fresh source of happiness was soon vouchsafed him.

On 9 November 1841 the wishes of the royal pair were crowned by the birth of a son. When the Princess Royal was born, Locock, the doctor in attendance, said, "Oh, Madam, it is a Princess," only to meet with the immediate reply, "Never mind, the next will be a Prince." [2] "Victoria kept her promise but from some crotchet of Prince Albert's they put off sending intelligence of her Majesty being in labour till so late that several of the Dignitaries, whose duty it was to assist at the birth, arrived after the event had occurred, particularly the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord President of the Council." [3]

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 376.
[2] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 214.
[3] *Ibid.*

The christening was fixed for January 25th 1842. The choice of godparents gave rise to quite a discussion owing to the conflicting claims of the numerous relatives. Victoria wished to satisfy the aspirations of her heir's English and German kinsfolk. Bickerings within the domestic circle caused complications. The King of Hanover was excluded and, as Stockmar writes, was furious.[1] The King of Saxony was ruled out because he was a Catholic, a decision which incensed some of the Coburgs. When all these discussions were going on the Baron advised that the Gordian knot should be cut at once by choosing the King of Prussia without delay and on purely political grounds.[2] His suggestion was accepted and the incident closed.

It has already been said that Stockmar attached considerable importance to the selection of a governess to the royal nursery and that he held that a "man's education begins the first day of his life". We need not be told that he paid special attention to selecting the occupant of this important post. He chose Sarah Lady Lyttelton, a Lady of the Queen's Bed-Chamber.[3]

Particulars are not available about the part which Stockmar played in arranging the details, as opposed to the basic principles, of the upbringing of Edward VII. It is known that he remained in England until October 1842. His biographer says that he dedicated a large portion of his unobtrusive activity to personal questions connected

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 376. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] *King Edward VII*, a Biography by Sir Sidney Lee (London: Macmillan & Co., 1922), vol. I, p. 15.

with the Court and with the education of the Royal children.[1] That he must have encountered some obstacles is shown by the fact that his journal on 20 April 1842 contains this entry:

"I have for months past pursued my plan with unflagging obstinacy. I could not do this without rendering myself odious, but the difficulties in the way could not stop me. The result is that there is now every prospect that nine-tenths of my proposal will be adopted."[2]

His efforts may have made him unpopular in some quarters, but they got firm support from Victoria and Albert. The royal approval is set forth in these emphatic words, written in 1867:

"The Queen, looking back with gratitude and affection to the friend of their early married life, can never forget the assistance given by the Baron to the young couple in regulating their movements and general mode of life and in directing the education of their children."[3]

Stockmar also drew up a memorandum for the upbringing of the Princess Royal and the Prince of Wales, which defines the general objects of a good education. It calls attention to the special difficulties in the case of Royal children, and stresses the fact that the natural position of wife and mother is made particularly arduous in the instance of a Queen Regnant. Frank as usual, the Baron then refers to the careers of Victoria's immediate predecessors. After saying that their faults belong to history he adds:

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 389. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Early Years*, p. 188.

"Unfortunately they (these faults) were of the most marked kind, and we can only explain them by supposing, either that the persons charged with their education were incapable of inculcating principles of truth and morality in their youth, or that they culpably neglected to do so, or lastly, that they were not properly supported in the fulfilment of this duty by the Royal parents." [1]

Melbourne, who even after his retirement from office remained Victoria's friend, in congratulating her upon the birth of the Prince of Wales said that "character depends much upon the race and on both sides he has a good chance." [2] Stockmar's prognosis was diametrically opposed to this view. He considered that the boy in the cradle had atavism to overcome and heredity to combat. He boldly proclaimed that:

"George III either did not understand his duties as a father or neglected them. Three of his sons, George IV, the Duke of York and William IV were all brought up in England: the Dukes of Kent, Cumberland, Sussex and Cambridge for the most part abroad."

So disgusted was Stockmar with the behaviour of all the sons of George III, that he announced that "there cannot be any doubt that the conduct of these princes has done more than anything else to diminish the respect and influence of Monarchy in this country, and to weaken that strong feeling of loyalty which is peculiar to the English and which has distinguished them for centuries." [3]

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 390. [2] *King Edward VII*, vol. I, p. 6.
[3] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 391.

This language is strong enough; that of the following extract is even stronger:

"That George IV did not, by his worthless conduct, succeed in getting himself excluded from the throne, was the result of the strength of the British Constitution and of the great toleration and circumspectness of the practical nation which he governed." [1]

A doctor diagnoses a case, not for the purpose of stating a fact or even of formulating a principle, but in order to ascertain what remedy should be applied to cure the evil identified by him. Stockmar acted on this salutary rule when he so clearly set forth the derelictions of George III, George IV and William IV. He was struck by the circumstance that although what he calls "the moral portion" of the nation detested George IV, that prince was not dethroned but died King of England. His attention was arrested by the fact that the Duke of York, although guilty of many follies and recurring mistakes, was able to win, at all events for a certain period, a measure of popularity. He asked himself why was it that William IV who, at no time was either a moral or a wise man, obtained, at the end of his reign, the flattering sobriquet of the "Good old Sailor King"?

Having reviewed the elder sons of George III, Stockmar turned to their brothers, the Dukes of Kent, Cumberland, Sussex and Cambridge. He reached the conclusion that these four were not inferior in natural ability to the other three children of George III. He declared, however,

[1] *Ibid.*

that "though not one hair's breadth worse than their elder brothers, they remained their whole life long unpopular with the mass of the nation".[1]

Stockmar held George III primarily responsible for these conditions which, in his opinion, "diminished the respect and influence of the Monarchy" in England. He drew, at the same time, a deadly parallel between, on the one hand, the relative popularity of George IV, the Duke of York and William IV, and on the other the unceasing unpopularity of their intellectual and moral—or immoral—equals, their brothers, the Dukes of Kent, Cumberland, Sussex and Cambridge.[2]

Stockmar went on to show that the faults of George IV, the Duke of York and William IV were looked upon by the public as being thoroughly English. "I have myself heard it confessed a hundred times," he writes, "that though these princes were thoroughly bad, yet then, at all events, their faults were English faults, and that the nation therefore had to take them as they found them, and make the best of them."[3] These three Princes, George IV, the Duke of York and William IV had been brought up in England. Their virtues and their vices reflected the influences which had surrounded their youth. They

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 391.

[2] It is asserted by some authorities that the Duke of Cambridge became very popular in his latter years. It should not be overlooked, however, that the facts set forth in the text are not advanced as the opinion of the present author. They are merely given as expressive of Stockmar's view.

[3] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 392.

were intellectual and moral products of the soil whence they sprang.

The other four sons of George III were, so Stockmar affirms, " principally brought up abroad ".[1] " As often as in private or public life, they exposed themselves to the censure of the public ", he continues, " they were reproached with having ' foreign ideas ', and the principal ground of whatever was thought blameworthy in them, was sought for in their foreign education." [2] They were regarded as exotics ; they were reproached with being foreigners ; their vices were accentuated because they were deemed to have been imported from abroad ; their virtues, if any, were not seen because the obnoxious foreign veneer hid them from view.

In bringing this indictment of George III and of Victoria's father and uncles to an end, Stockmar said :

" This historical survey contains a lesson of the greatest possible importance and affords the most thorough proof of the view, which I would desire to impress upon the Queen and the Prince Consort, viz. that the education of the royal children, from the very earliest beginning, should be thoroughly *moral* and thoroughly *English*." [3]

The *Denkwürdigkeiten* do not give the date of this " Memorandum on the Education of the Royal Children ". Reference to Martin's *Life of the Prince Consort* shows that it was submitted on 6 March 1842.[4] It was preceded by an introduction which said that " good education cannot begin too

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 391. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 392. [3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. II, p. 175.

early. 'To neglect beginnings,' says Locke, 'is the fundamental error into which most parents fall.' In the child the affections and feelings develop at an earlier period than the intellectual or reasoning faculties. The beginning of education must, therefore, be directed to the regulation of the child's natural instincts to give them direction and, above all, to keep the mind pure." [1]

The Prince of Wales was only four months old and the Princess Royal in her sixteenth month when this memorandum was drafted. The subject discussed by Stockmar was thus not of immediate topical interest.

But weeks soon became months and months years and as early as 1846 the question, "Who should educate the Prince of Wales," was discussed even outside the Palace.[2] The Baron stated his views on the subject in another memorandum, dated 28 July 1846, which amplifies the arguments he had already developed. He faced the issue with his usual boldness, courageously taking the attitude that on the nature of the Prince's education depends whether the future Sovereign of England will reign in harmony with or in opposition to the prevailing opinions of his people.[3]

Stockmar held that the gravity of the question was increased by the fact that Europe was then obviously in a period of transition. He foresaw that by the time Albert Edward ascended the Throne many of the maxims of Government held to be sacred when he issued his warning would

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. II, p. 175.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 183. [3] *Ibid.*

then either be out of date or about to be discarded. After mentioning some of the contemporary anomalies in the political and social structure of Europe, which had formerly been considered to be beyond cavil but which were then admitted to be either obsolescent or obsolete, he struck this note, using italics to drive home his meaning:

"The great and leading question, therefore, is whether the education of the Prince should be one *which will prepare him for the future* or one *which will stamp, perhaps indelibly, an impression of the sacred character of all existing institutions on his youthful mind and teach him that to resist change is to serve at once the cause of God and his country.*" [1]

Stockmar was incapable of asking a question without being prepared to attempt to answer it. His was a constructive and not merely a provocative, stimulative, tantalizing mind. True to his genius, he hastened to proclaim that "wisdom appears to dictate the superior advantages of the former course".[2] But being a Liberal and not a Radical—just as he was a Conservative and not an Obscurantist—he at once added:

"The education of the Prince should, however, nowise tend to make him a demagogue or a moral enthusiast but a man of calm, profound, comprehensive understanding imbued with a deep conviction of the indispensable necessity of practical morality to the welfare of both Sovereign and the people." [3]

Having thoroughly thought out the problem with which he was so deeply concerned, Stockmar ex-

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 184. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

plained that it was the duty of the Crown not "to take the lead in change, but to act as a balance-wheel on the movement of the social body".[1] His theory was that when the whole nation, or an imposing majority of it advances, the Sovereign should not stand still; but that when the movement is not general, but is irregular or precipitate, the royal influence may validly be brought into play in order to restore the equilibrium. And, bringing this phase of his analysis to an end, the Baron wrote:

"Above all attainments, the Prince should be trained to freedom of thought, and a firm reliance on the inherent power of sound principles, political, moral and religious, to sustain themselves and produce practical good, when left in a fair field of development."[2]

The final point touched on by Stockmar deals with the question of religion. He declares that the Prince of Wales "*must unquestionably* be trained" in the doctrine of the Church of England, and goes on to speak of the existence of what he describes as "antagonist creeds and opinions", and announces that the heir apparent "should be taught that God . . . has already legislated for men, both as individuals and as nations; that the laws of morality, which He has written in their nature, are the foundations on which alone their prosperity can be reared and that the human legislator and Sovereign have no higher duty than to discover and carry into execution these enactments of Divine legislation".[3]

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. II, p. 184.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 185. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

All these principles, Stockmar insisted, would be meaningless and afford an education which would be but a mockery of that term, unless the children were surrounded " only by those who are good and pure, who will teach not only by precept but by living example, for children are close observers, and prone to imitate whatever they see, whether good or evil ".[1]

This State paper—for these two memoranda " on the Education of the Royal Children " complete one another and form a homogeneous whole—is the Magna Carta of the Age of Victoria. It contains the synthesis of Victorianism, with all that the term implies. It shows why the Queen and the Prince Consort decided to break with England's past ; why they were determined to blaze for themselves and for their country a new path across the landmarks of history ; and why austere morality and insularity became the shibboleths of their reign.

It is all very well for those who are sons and daughters of another age, whose mentalities were formed in the crucible of Edwardianism, or during the beneficent rule of George V, to decry the rigorous morality and insularity for which the German Baron pleaded, but it was the reaction against the shortcomings of George III, George IV and William IV which now makes of so-called English hypocrisy the sheet anchor of the sanest liberty to-day enjoyed in Europe.

There had been a time when Victoria felt that one might be too strict in matters of propriety and

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

that "one ought to be indulgent towards other people's dreadful sins". She had even told Albert so. But these were the views to which she held when Melbourne was the bright, resplendent star in the firmament, and when Lehzen dominated the fireside. When Albert became the exponent of Stockmar's principles a new code of ethics came into practice. The Queen supported it with all the zeal of a convert. It became her permanent contribution to the betterment of her nation. And it was largely Stockmar's work. He carried his point because he addressed his arguments to Victoria's maternal instincts and because he pleaded with her to save her son from the circumstances which had made failures of her father and her many uncles.

This appeal to the heart of a Queen who was also a mother carried the day. Its place in history has not been sufficiently emphasized. Stockmar did not drive home his point without a struggle. It has already been pointed out that he spoke of having rendered himself odious as a result of his plan for the education of the Royal children, and that he mentioned "the difficulties in the way". The very terms of his historical survey bear witness to the obstacles he had encountered. The document reads like the effort of a man who is fighting with his back against the wall, and who feels the ground slipping from beneath his feet. He marshals his facts with an impassioned eloquence which seems to say:

"I am telling you the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The final decision lies

with you. It devolves upon you and not upon me to decide what is to be done, but if you listen to Melbourne's absurdities about the splendid heredity of the Prince of Wales, the collapse of monarchy in England is inevitable."

The boy may be father to the man, but it is equally true that children educate their parents, in the sense that mothers and fathers are forced to discipline themselves in order to rear their offspring in accordance with the ideals they fix for their loved ones. The lesson which Stockmar impressed upon Victoria, when he demonstrated that Melbourne's prattle about the splendid heredity of the Prince of Wales was nothing but the vagaries of a courtier, put the fear of God into the breast of the young couple. Their love for their son taught them that if the Baron had told the truth when he asserted that "George III either did not properly understand his duties as a father, or he neglected them",[1] then no historian of the future was going to be able to write that they had failed to comprehend their duties as parents or had neglected them. No writing should appear on the wall of their Palace to tell them that the days of Monarchy in England were nearing their end.

It was manifestly impossible for Victoria and Albert to apply the principles, which Stockmar had formulated with dogmatic finality in the nursery, if they were not prepared to extend them to the Court. The Queen and the Prince remembered that they were parents and their conception of their duty to their son dictated their conduct.

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 390.

They set the tone of the Court and they insisted that those who basked in the sunshine of their favour should at least give outward evidence of conforming to their views.

The simian descent of man finds a measure of confirmation in the way in which the English middle classes seek to imitate their aristocracy. The British proletariat is not made up of monkeys who stand upright on their hind legs, but it is a fact that in England the lower stratum of society attempts to follow slavishly the antics of those who take precedence over it. The net result of the necessity of giving Albert Edward an education that "should be thoroughly *moral* and thoroughly *English*" had its repercussion upon everybody.

Standards which are proclaimed by the lips are not always followed by the heart, but they have an influence that is far from negligible. Hypocrisy is the tribute that vice pays to virtue and this toll has its effect upon the body politic. We thus see that what is generally called Victorianism had its genesis, its evolution and its crystallization in the successful effort of a German physician to prove to the Royal parents of the Prince of Wales that the strain they had transmitted to their son was not what Melbourne had defined. The inevitable reaction against the follies of preceding decades naturally had a great bearing on this phenomenon. It was, however, the fixed resolve of a mother to safeguard the birthright of her heir, and the tendency of the English to imitate their social superiors, that gave the pendulum the strong swing to the right which constitutes Victorianism.

A letter written by Albert to Stockmar, dated 6 January 1846, shows that even at that early moment he saw what a part " moral dignity " was then playing in assuring glory to Victoria's reign. The country had then just emerged from a serious political crisis. The Prince explained to the Baron how gratified he was that the nation recognized the advantage that had accrued to it from the new policy of the Crown being " so free from partisanship ". And, emphasizing how beneficent this orientation had been and continued to be, he added: " Had we not also to effect the *moral dignity* of the Court? This basis has been secured. To my mind, the exaltation of Royalty is possible only through the personal character of the Sovereign." [1]

Some few years later Stockmar had occasion to comment on the utilitarian value of a moral Court. While he and Melbourne had always been staunch friends, he felt that the Whig Leader had made mistakes which had jeopardized the success of Victoria's reign. " Let men like the late Lord Melbourne explain as they please ' that damned morality is sure to ruin everything ' ," he wrote; " I, on the other hand, can testify before God, that the English machine works smoothly and well only when the Sovereign is upright and truthful and that when he has been insincere, mendacious and wicked, it has creaked and fouled and jolted to within an ace of coming to a deadlock." [2]

Stockmar, as the godfather of Victorianism, may

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 316.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 550.

well have been proud of his achievement. It undoubtedly consolidated England's Crown, buttressed the cause of governmental sanity and gave a renewed stimulus to wholesome liberty. It is today the corner-stone of that civilization which is the bulwark of European peace.

CHAPTER XII

EDWARDIANISM

IF Stockmar sought to save the Prince of Wales from the contagion of a dangerous heredity and if he succeeded in getting Victoria and Albert to follow his behests, he signally failed to win the boy's affection. Sir Sidney Lee's absorbingly interesting *King Edward VII* makes this quite plain. It is there said with an authority which is not open to question that :

"Amid the foreign influence environing his (Albert Edward's) childhood there was only one to whom the Prince never quite reconciled himself. The solemn figure of Baron Stockmar, his father's former tutor and present mentor, hovered over the Prince's childhood and boyhood, to the frequent disturbance of his equanimity. In all matters touching the Prince's upbringing he was the royal parents' first and last court of appeal. Rigid in his standards of discipline, stern in rebuke of childish faults, overflowing in cautious counsel, the Baron watched the young Prince's physical and intellectual development with a disconcerting seriousness." [1]

It is the primary duty of a teacher, and certainly of a man who, in all matters touching the upbringing

[1] *King Edward VII*, vol. I, p. 15.

of a child, is its parents' first and last court of appeal, to win and hold the sympathy of his pupil. A teacher who does not gain access to a child's heart is unable to obtain admission to its brain, or at all events is precluded from playing any part in forming its character, and this, when all is said, is the predominant purpose of education as opposed to mere instruction. There is no doubt whatever that Stockmar did not attain his objective—the exercising of a dominant rôle in moulding the mind and soul of the Prince of Wales.

When a man occupies a relation to a boy such as the Baron held to Albert Edward, the failure of his mission does not imply merely something negative. It goes much further. It engenders a hatred and begets a rancour which may have manifold ramifications and interminable repercussions. "The solemn figure of Baron Stockmar", Lee's words have already brought out, "hovered over the Prince's childhood and boyhood, to the frequent disturbance of his equanimity." This means that "his father's former tutor and present mentor" was a source of perennial irritation to Albert Edward and this antipathy became deep seated and almost second nature to the young Prince. In other words, Stockmar not only failed to win his pupil's affection but he made the boy hate him.

The result was that Albert Edward's detestation was not confined to his pet aversion, but was communicated to everything which Stockmar typified in his eyes—a "thoroughly *moral* and thoroughly *English* education". Natural stubbornness caused the Prince of Wales to react against the

austerity with which he was surrounded and to believe, even as his mother had once believed, "that one ought to be indulgent towards other people's dreadful sins". And, by the same token, he became internationally minded and preferred to add to his "thoroughly *English*" education a congenial Continental background.

There was a German thoroughness about the way in which Stockmar sought to inculcate his principles which was particularly irritating. The conscientious Baron wrote to him, while he was still a child, that one in his position "should write a firm, large and legible hand".[1] Albert Edward had probably been forced to address a loving letter of some sort to the one person in all the world whom he really hated. To have such a rebuff, interspersed with "cautious counsel", intensified Albert Edward's dislike and may even have contributed to giving to his handwriting that lack of elegance and individuality to which his biographer refers.[2]

There was, however, more than one feature of Stockmar's plan of education which succeeded admirably. The Prince of Wales became thoroughly English in the best sense of the term. He may have had a forbearance towards "other people's dreadful sins" which his mother thought out of place, and he may have shown a sympathy for the beautiful, particularly among the daughters of Eve, which was not typical of his father, but he always showed an observance of constitutional limitations which neither of his parents could criticize and which was

[1] *King Edward VII*, vol. I, p. 17. [2] *Ibid.*

truly British in its respect of the law. He may have enjoyed consorting with interesting foreigners of both sexes, but he was never known to evince any enthusiasm for Prussia or for that aspect of the Teutonic mentality typified by the Hohenzollerns. He was thoroughly English, for, although he was far more than half-German, he did not allow that predominant strain in his blood to have the slightest influence over him.

If Stockmar stressed the necessity of making Albert Edward's education " thoroughly *moral* and thoroughly *English* " he emphasized its moral phase because his prescience told him that the success of Victoria's reign, as well as her son's welfare, required that there should be a strong reaction against the tendency of the times. When he submitted the first half of his *memorandum*, he centred his fire upon the shortcomings of George III, George IV and William IV, but he also had a target which was nearer at hand. He was shooting at that spirit of dangerous toleration which Pope had in view when writing that :

> Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
> As to be hated needs but to be seen ;
> Yet seen too oft familiar with her face,
> We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

When Stockmar drafted that part of the State paper which begat Victorianism, Albert's influence over Victoria was undoubtedly orientated in the right direction, but Lehzen was still a factor to be considered, and the shadow of Melbourne was not yet effaced. The former Prime Minister adhered to his theory that " the damned morality

is sure to ruin everything" and the Baron, fearing the pernicious effect of such heresy, sought to counteract it by his frontal attack on the evil effects of the misconduct of the Queen's immediate predecessors.

It has already been explained that when the original "*memorandum on the Education of the Royal Children*" was presented to the Queen the Prince of Wales was far too young for its immediate application to be considered in so far as he was concerned. It is obvious therefore that Stockmar's impassioned plea and his attempt to carry his point by assault, was born of a desire to deal with an evil which he considered both menacing and dangerous as well as immediate and far reaching. This is why the question of the purity of the environment surrounding the Prince of Wales dominated all that was written at the time.

When, however, the second half of the *memorandum* was submitted in July 1846 (as opposed to March 1842), not only had Lehzen's wings been cut but Melbourne was a mere memory. He had had a paralytic stroke in October 1842 and was "dragging one foot after the other and with no speculation in his eye".[1] Moreover, Albert was already looked on as Victoria's "Permanent Minister", or as "the Constitutional genius of the Queen".

Now that the essential prerequisite to a successful Monarch—a moral Court—had then been assured, Stockmar devoted his attention to demonstrating that it was essential that the Prince of Wales should

[1] *Lord Melbourne*, p. 312.

be trained to become a tolerant Monarch. Liberalism and toleration, in other words, became Stockmar's contribution to Edwardianism.

So absolutely did Stockmar impress his ideas upon those who surrounded Albert Edward that the Prince Consort unconsciously presented them to the public as his own. This he did in an address delivered in June 1857 at an educational conference. Knowing how strongly Stockmar had driven home the necessity of avoiding anything that savoured of partisanship, the fact that Albert discussed a subject which was considered " an extremely ticklish one " [1] shows how completely Stockmar had woven his principles into the fabric of Victoria's reign.

Albert Edward, both as a boy and as a young man, may have cordially disliked Stockmar, but the cardinal principles brought out so clearly in the *memorandum*, after its first phase had assured the proper moral tone of the Court, dominated the mentality of Victoria's son not only as heir apparent but as ruling Sovereign. So carefully had the Baron laid down the predicate that by the time a new reign would begin public opinion would have discarded " many of the maxims of government and institutions of society now in the ascendancy " that the attitude of Edward VII, when reading the " Protestant Declaration ", at the time of his accession, shows how far-sighted Stockmar had been in making of liberalism and toleration the keynote of the education of the Prince of Wales.

Lee's *Edward VII* explains this. We find in its pages that :

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. IV, p. 67.

"Before reading the speech from the throne he (the King) was called upon by the Lord Chancellor, in accordance with the Bill of Rights of 1689, to repeat a Declaration from the Throne repudiating the doctrine of transubstantiation and asserting that 'the invocation or adoration of the Virgin Mary or any other Saint and the Sacrifice of the Mass as they are now used in the Church of Rome are superstitious and idolatrous'. . . . The King read these compulsory words, which he regarded as a gratuitous insult to his Roman Catholic subjects, in a low tone, resolving that no successor to the Throne should submit to the torment which he had suffered of pronouncing from the Throne a clumsy and antiquated denunciation of the religious belief of a substantial section of his subjects." [1]

Stockmar lived and died before Germany ceased, as Heine expresses it, to snore beneath a hundred rulers. He obviously knew nothing of the Germany of to-day or of that which Bismarck's genius and Moltke's sword called into being. His suzerain was a petty prince. He felt the effaced part his race played on the stage of the world. Hatred and contempt for the Confederation of the Rhine, and for the political character of the smaller German States filled his soul. He dreamed of the unity, power and greatness of the Fatherland.

Looking back at the impeccably correct attitude of Edward VII when on the throne and weighing it in the light of our knowledge of his intense dislike of Stockmar, is it not possible that this factor may

[1] *King Edward VII*, vol. II, p. 22.

have played a part in writing the history of the years immediately preceding 1914? Children are apt to generalize and they often get their generalizations out of harmony with the true facts, but can it be said that this criticism applies to the King's attitude towards Germany? He entertained no general antipathy towards Germans, for he had many friends among them and, at one time, cheerfully spent considerable time in their country. What he disliked in the German Empire was its militarism. And this aversion was brought about by the fact that he associated it, rightfully or wrongfully, with tyranny.

Greville wrote in his diary as early as 12 December 1858, that:

"He (Clarendon) told me that the Prince (Consort) himself, in spite of his natural good sense had been very injudicious in his way of treating his children and that the Prince of Wales resented very much the severity he had experienced." [1]

Some five and a half years earlier Greville quoted Lady Lyttelton, to whom Stockmar had committed the education of the Prince of Wales, as having said that the Queen was very fond of her children "but severe in her manner".[2] Another of his journal entries asserts that Albert "expressed something like regret or doubt about what he called the 'aggressive' system that the Queen had followed in bringing up the Royal children".[3]

There appears to be no doubt about the accuracy of the deduction of Edward VII's authorized

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 456.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 455. [3] *Ibid.*

biographer that the King "looked back with pain on his educational ordeal".[1] He seems to have done so because carefully chosen tutors, who answered Stockmar's definition "of persons morally good, intelligent, well-informed and experienced", had received instructions "to check undesirable tendencies of adolescence".[2]

Even as a child Edward VII had "evidently a will of his own" and "was rather positive and opinionated and inclined to lay down the law".[3] With a personality so pronounced, when still so young, the conjecture may be hazarded that the boy who "resented very much the severity he had experienced", put the blame for the harsh treatment to which he was subjected upon the German who supervised his education, and beginning by hating the man whom he considered the bane of his existence, passed from this aversion to a detestation of the dominant German caste and ended up by being convinced that the severity which had been meted out to him was typical of German disciplinary methods which find in militarism their concrete expression.

It is not meant by this that Edward VII encircled Germany or that he did anything to cause the Great War. All that is implied is that his statesmanship facilitated the diplomatic manœuvring of his Ministers and made possible the creation of those *Ententes* and alliances which prevented Germany from imposing her will on the world. But behind all that the King accomplished stands the

[1] *King Edward VII*, vol. II, p. 28. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] Greville, *op. cit.*, p. 456.

dominant idea that whereas Stockmar succeeded, through the Victorianism which he called into being in solidifying the English Crown and through the Edwardianism which he inspired in additionally buttressing it, he, nevertheless, instilled in the heart of his spiritual grandson a hatred for German methods which carried in its wake an aversion to those who ruled Germany during the early years of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER XIII

LEOPOLD'S TENACITY

IT was on 10 February 1840 that Albert led Victoria to the altar. From her accession until 10 October 1839, when the Prince consolidated his sway over her heart, Melbourne exercised a dominant control over Victoria's mind. Leopold felt that with his niece in love with his nephew—and perhaps with the "dearest" Baroness propitiated—he could safely return to the charge and attempt to dictate England's foreign policy.

On 5 December 1838 the King of the Belgians had been given a stinging rebuff, dictated by Melbourne, although softened by liberal scatterings of "dear uncles" and mitigated by a final "love to Aunt Louise and the children" from "your most affectionate niece".[1] He returned to the charge when he considered that Victoria's marriage had relegated the Prime Minister to the routine details of office. A letter written to Victoria as early as 31 January 1840, before the marital knot had been tied, shows the incorrigible Leopold commenting on English politics and characterizing a decision of the House of Commons as "*vulgar*" and "*disrespectful*".[2] This stricture was followed on 22 September 1840 [3] by a comment on the

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 136.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 214. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 229.

Eastern Question which received a reply four days later in which the "dearest uncle" was informed that "I assure you I *do* give these affairs my "*most serious* attention".[1]

This correspondence between niece and uncle, which had lost its political aspect when Leopold felt that he had no means of counteracting Melbourne's veto, assumed, during that twilight period when Victoria was desperately in love with Albert but when she nevertheless refused to consult him on governmental matters, so far reaching a character that the wily King began to fear that the English Foreign Office might learn of his machinations and take steps to counteract them. A letter dated 6 June 1841 and signed "always your very devoted Niece, Victoria R", uses this significant language:

"As to my letters, dear Uncle, I beg to *assure* you (for Lord Palmerston was *most indignant* at the doubt when I once asked) that *none* of your letters nor any of those *coming* to us, are ever opened at the Foreign Office. My letters to Brussels and Paris are *quite safe*, and all those to Germany, which are of any *real* consequence, I always send through Rothschild, which is perfectly *safe* and very quick."[2]

It may be assumed that Stockmar knew of this subterranean correspondence going on between Leopold and Victoria and that he deplored it. He saw all the perils latent in it. He knew that if it were ever known the English people would be indignant and that their resentment might have a repercussion upon the security of the Queen's

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 230. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 290.

Crown. He was convinced that such interchanges could not go on indefinitely without leaking out. His recognition of the gravity of the peril and of the need of a remedy, told him that this problem, like all others confronting Victoria, would find its solution when Albert became "the Queen's Constitutional genius". Of course, what he really meant was that all would be well when he himself established his intellectual dominion over the young couple, with the Prince Consort reflecting his views and transmitting them to Victoria.

As it took time for this process to attain its full effect, it becomes manifest that when the Tory Ministers kissed hands on 3 September 1841, Peel was confronted with the fact that his Sovereign was carrying on what the Radicals of those days would have characterized as treasonable correspondence with a foreign potentate and that this was done, at least in part, through a banking house of German origin but relatively recently established in London. Had the Tory leader attempted to defend his Queen by pointing out that this foreign potentate was her uncle and that her letters to him were not treasonable correspondence, the critics of the Monarchy would have answered, "Why this secrecy?", "Why this distrust of the diplomatic pouch?", "Why this recourse to Rothschild, 'which is perfectly *safe* and very quick'?"

It is manifest that the Foreign Office and the British Intelligence Service knew not only of the letters which passed between Victoria and Leopold, but also of the circumstance that niece and uncle were taking inordinate precautions

to assure the secrecy of what they wrote. It is probable that Peel stood aghast at the consequences that might flow from a question in Parliament about the propriety of the Sovereign corresponding with another Monarch without the knowledge of Her Majesty's Ministers and through the intervention of a banking house of German origin relatively recently established in the city. And added to the potentialities of the explosion which such an inquiry might provoke was the unconstitutional influence that Melbourne continued to exercise over Victoria, perhaps with Lehzen's help, after he had ceased to be the Queen's official Counsellor.

It is recorded that the only serious difficulty which ever arose between Victoria and her first Prime Minister was when she insisted on limiting to five minutes the time allowed to the men after dinner.[1] When the hour of parting with him arrived and Peel's induction into office was inevitable she "was much affected, but soon recovered her calmness".[2] It is Anson, Albert's Private Secretary, who says that the Queen "soon recovered her calmness". She wrote to Lady Gainsborough on 6 September 1841 that "last week was a most painful, trying one to me, and this separation from my truly excellent and kind friend Lord Melbourne, most *distressing*".[3] And two days later she advised "her dearest Uncle" that "it has been indeed a sad time for me and I am still bewildered and can't believe that my excellent Lord Melbourne is

[1] *Lord Melbourne*, p. 253.
[2] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 306. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 318.

no longer my Minister, but he will be, as you say, and as he has *already* proved himself, *very* useful and *valuable* as my friend out of office ".[1]

Not only was Victoria " still bewildered " on 8 September 1841 at the retirement of Melbourne but she adds in the same letter that " the longer the time gets since we parted, the *more* I feel it ". When, in May 1841, there had been a political flurry and it looked as if the days of the Whig Cabinet were numbered, the Queen wrote the King of the Belgians that " the probability of parting from so kind and excellent a being as Lord Melbourne as a *Minister* (for a *friend* he will *always* remain)is very, *very* painful even if one feels it will probably not be for long ".[2]

The question naturally suggests itself why was it that Stockmar did not foresee this tendency and why did he not arrest it? The reply is that Victoria was naturally inclined to be autocratic,[3] that Lehzen, as a German, approved of and encouraged it, that the Baron dared not attempt to thwart it and was forced to content himself with attenuating an evil which he could not eradicate. At the time of the Queen's accession Stockmar had no effective means of meeting the situation with which he was confronted because Melbourne dominated the Drawing Room and Lehzen the Boudoir. All that he could hope to do was to hold it in check until the Queen married and the Prince Consort became equal to the emergency.

There is another factor which should not be

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 320. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 275.
[3] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 36.

overlooked. From the beginning of Victoria's reign to her marriage, the table-talk of Melbourne fills the largest space in her journals [1] and it was not until after Stockmar had left England to take charge of moulding Albert into shape that the Prime Minister consolidated his influence. Melbourne was her Regius Professor, with no professional disqualifications.[2] "His head was a truly noble one and he was a fine specimen of manly beauty in the meridian of life. Not only were his features handsome, but his expression was in the highest degree intellectual." [3] The very circumstance that the Baron checkmated this redoubtable politician whose "voice was so deep and musical that to hear him say the most ordinary thing was a pleasure", shows with what consummate ability and untiring devotion the Queen's interests had been defended pending the entrance of the Prince Consort into the lists.

However sincere Melbourne may have been in permitting the self-willed Victoria to think that his political genius was essential to her, the fact stands out that he let sentiment gain the mastery over him when he resigned. Albert urged him to continue to give "the Queen his advice and assistance, especially on measures affecting their private, concerns and family concerns." [4] His official note, submitting his resignation, dated 30 August 1841 (6 p.m.), ends in these words:

"Lord Melbourne earnestly hopes that Your

[1] *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 33.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 35. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 33.
[4] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 303.

Majesty is well and composed, and with the most anxious wishes for Your Majesty's welfare and happiness, remains ever Your Majesty's most devoted and attached servant, and he trusts that he may add, without presumption, Your Majesty's faithful and affectionate friend." [1]

Stockmar was not in England when Albert was urging Melbourne to continue to give Victoria advice and assistance, especially in family matters, and when the Whig leader was stressing that he was a "most devoted and attached servant" and "faithful and affectionate friend". The *Denkwürdigkeiten* state specifically that "as no business of immediate importance detained him he returned to Coburg in April 1841. But the summons from the English Court becoming, during the course of the summer, more and more pressing, he was back in London as early as September".[2] He was thus not able to warn the Prince Consort that it was a mistake to propose to the leader of the Opposition to give "the Queen advice and assistance". He was not on hand to let Melbourne know how essential it was that everybody connected with the retiring government should fade into the background.

The net result of Albert's gratitude, Melbourne's friendship and Stockmar's absence was that matters took an awkward turn. *L'affaire a pris un mauvais pli*, is the French way of expressing the same idea, but perhaps more accurately. Anson was present when the Prince made what was perhaps the initial mistake. He was Albert's Private Secretary and

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 306. [2] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 358.

had served the retiring statesman in the same capacity. A man of integrity and of parts, he did not have Stockmar's uncanny flair for foreseeing what might happen. His *Memorandum*, drafted at Windsor Castle on 29 August 1841, after setting forth that Albert urged Melbourne to continue to give " the Queen his advice and assistance, especially on measures affecting their private concerns and family concerns ", adds :

" He (the Prince) told Lord Melbourne it was on these points that he felt Lord Melbourne's advice had been particularly sound, and there was no reason why this should not be continued, and any communication might be made through me." [1]

This excerpt shows that three men, Albert, Melbourne and Anson contemplated restricting the scope of the " advice and assistance " of the Queen's Regius Professor, and that they recognized the fact that direct communication between the Sovereign and him who was then the leader of the Opposition was reprobated, if not prohibited, by the Constitution. It was for this reason that they proposed that the advice and assistance should be limited to family matters and that Anson would be the intermediary through whom this restricted counsel would be transmitted.

It was typical of the shortsightedness of men of intelligence whose acts revolve around women, that Albert, Melbourne and Anson overlooked the salient consideration that it did not suffice for them to decree that the communications between the Queen and her retiring Prime Minister should be

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 303.

limited to such and such subjects and that even these matters should pass through the hands of Albert's Private Secretary. They forgot that unless Victoria and Lehzen were in agreement with them that their decision was merely "love's labour lost". And they also overlooked the fact that one of their own group, Melbourne, was then in his sixty-third year and that men of that age who have a beautiful voice and a profile and no wife to hold them in leash are apt to be putty in the hands of a woman in her early twenties who is influenced by a former governess who makes her influence felt from the background.

Reference to Anson's *Memorandum* shows that the three men feared Lehzen's occult influence. Instead of allowing their first impulse to guide them and of taking advantage of the change of government to have her removed from her strategic post, they seemed to have shrunk before the possibility of encountering Victoria's anger. It will be recalled that one of the conditions of Peel's acceptance of office had been that the intensely partisan Whig ladies of the Royal Bed-Chamber should resign when the Ministry retired. Melbourne appears to have suggested, at this conference, that Lehzen should be assimilated to a partisan Whig lady of the Bed-Chamber and persuaded to leave the Palace.

The Whig Leader knew that Lehzen was a thorn in Albert's side and he sought to have her given an innocuous honour and sent back to Hanover. He felt that it was largely through his influence that open warfare between the Prince

and the Baroness had been obviated. He feared that with his retirement these strained relations might react on the love which Victoria bore her Consort. It was because of these various circumstances that the note drawn up by Anson, immediately after referring to the restricted "advice and assistance" that Melbourne should give the Queen, through Albert's Private Secretary, adds:

"Lord Melbourne said that the Prince had also entered upon the subject of the Baroness (Lehzen) and expressed the constant state of annoyance he was kept in by her interference. Lord Melbourne said to me: 'It will be far more difficult to remove her after the change of Government than now, because if pressed by a Tory Minister, the Queen's prejudice would be immediately aroused.'" [1]

It is obvious that Melbourne, because he was genuinely fond of Victoria and Albert and most anxious to make their family life a happy one, was perfectly willing to assume the task of getting rid of the pestiferous Lehzen. He knew that a young couple should be allowed to work out its own salvation and that the presence of a super mother-in-law in a home is pregnant with danger. He was overruled. It was Anson who put his veto upon the suggestion. He brings this out in these words:

"I admitted this, but said that though the Prince felt that if he pressed the point against the Baroness remaining, he should be able to carry it, still his good feeling and affection for the Queen prevented him from pressing what he knew would

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 303.

be painful, and what could not be carried without an exciting scene ; he must remain on his guard and patiently abide the result." [1]

Albert and Anson probably argued somewhat along these lines :

"What Melbourne says is true. Lehzen is a pernicious influence in the Royal household. But he is about to disappear from the scene whereas we are destined to remain. Stockmar is not here. The entire brunt of this decision, if carried out, will fall upon us. It cannot be executed without 'an exciting scene'. It may fail. If it does, we shall have to face, without having Stockmar to help us, an irate Sovereign and a vindictive virago, entrenched in power."

If Stockmar had been in England it is almost certain that timidity would not have prevailed. Another *memorandum* by Anson, to which reference has already been made, dated 28 May 1840, shows that the Baron then stated that "the Queen is influenced more than she is aware of by the Baroness. In consequence of that influence she is not so ingenuous as she was two years ago".[2]

It is clear, therefore, that because Stockmar was not in England when the Whig Cabinet was overthrown, Peel, on assuming office, was confronted not only with Leopold's renewed interference in England's foreign politics and Melbourne's assumption of the right to continue to give the Queen and the Prince Consort "advice and assistance, especially on measures affecting their private concerns and family concerns", but also with the mainten-

[1] *Ibid.* [2] *Ibid.*, p. 224.

ance, behind the scenes, of that unknown quantity Lehzen, whose influence although intangible was so all-pervading that it menaced the happiness of the Royal Family and was believed to play a part in accentuating Victoria's natural tendencies towards political partisanship and autocracy.

The exact date of Stockmar's arrival in England is not available. The *Denkwürdigkeiten* say no more than that "he was back in London as early as September". Martin's monumental *Life of the Prince Consort* is a little more specific and at the same time even more vague. It says that "Sir Robert Peel completed his arrangements for the formation of the new Ministry so quickly that on the 3rd of September . . . the new Cabinet kissed hands upon their appointment. . . . Lord Melbourne told Baron Stockmar, who had just returned from Coburg, that Sir Robert Peel had behaved most handsomely." [1]

Peel took over the reins of government on Friday, 3 September 1841. We do not know on what day Stockmar arrived in London. The inference is, in the absence of anything to the contrary, that he took advantage of the week-end to arrive in England in time to set about his self-allotted task on the morning of Monday, 6 September 1841.

It would be unreasonable to assume that he began his operations at an earlier moment. This means that all that was done before that day took place during the Baron's absence. In other words, in endeavouring to find out how Melbourne carried out the spirit of the gentlemen's agreement of

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 118.

29 August 1841 between him, Albert and Anson, before Stockmar's influence could be brought into play to direct the trend of events, our examination should be restricted to what occurred before 6 September 1841.

It appears that when the three men, Albert, Melbourne and Anson, were covering the ground to which reference has already been made, Victoria sent the veteran statesman "some very clever and interesting etchings". In acknowledging receipt of them a note was written, dated 30 August 1841, which conveyed the information that:

"Lord Melbourne will ever treasure them as remembrances of Your Majesty's kindness and regard, which he prizes beyond measure. They will, as Your Majesty says, certainly recall to recollection a melancholy day, but still Lord Melbourne hopes and trusts that with the divine blessing it will hereafter be looked back upon with less grief and bitterness of feeling than it must be regarded at present." [1]

The underlying note of this letter was certainly at variance with every principle which Stockmar had proclaimed. It breathes a spirit of partisanship. It seems to convert Monday, 30 August 1841, into a species of Ash Wednesday on which all loyal Englishmen and English women should wear sackcloths and smear their faces with ashes because the swing of the political pendulum had thrown a Whig Ministry out of office.

On the same day that this letter was written

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 304.

Anson had another interview with Melbourne. The official *memorandum* thus sets forth what took place.

He (Melbourne) said "if it were possible for anyone to advise Peel, he would recommend that he should write fully to Her Majesty, and *elementarily*, as Her Majesty always liked to have full knowledge upon everything which was going on. He would advise the Queen to be cautious in giving a verbal decision, that she should not allow herself to be *driven into a corner*, and forced to decide where she felt her mind was not made up and required reflection." [1]

No criticism can validly be made of Melbourne's attitude as set forth in these words. Anson's *memorandum* goes on to say:

"I asked Lord Melbourne if he considered the future position of himself with the Queen, and also of Peel with the Queen. He said he had not and would avoid entering into any discussion—he felt sure he would be regarded with extreme jealousy . . . —always suspected of secret intercourse and intrigue. He would make me the medium of any written communication." [2]

It is quite clear, then, that if 29 August 1841 had been "a melancholy day" and if Melbourne had promised on that date to continue to give to the Queen and the Prince Consort "his advice and assistance especially in measures affecting their private concerns and family concerns" and then only through Anson, he seemed to consider, on 30 August 1841, that "he would avoid entering

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 305. [2] *Ibid.*

into any discussion" with the Queen "because he would be suspected of secret intercourse and intrigue". It is easy to see why Stockmar may be credited with having been opposed to any maintenance of close contact between the Queen and her former Prime Minister. Public opinion would be prone to misinterpret any discussions between them, suspecting them, as Melbourne put it, of "secret intercourse and intrigue".

Notwithstanding the very correct attitude thus defined by him in regard to his future line of conduct, the Whig statesman wrote to Victoria on this same day at 6 p.m.:

"Lord Melbourne will be anxious to hear from Your Majesty as to what has passed with Sir R. Peel. Your Majesty will, Lord Melbourne is sure, feel that the same secrecy which Your Majesty has always observed respecting public affairs is more particularly necessary at the present moment." [1]

There is something enigmatic about this last sentence. What does it mean? Does it convey the idea that Melbourne did not expect the Queen to discuss public affairs with him because, in as much as he was out of office, he could not hope to learn of official secrets? If this is what it implies, why did he say that "he was anxious to hear from Your Majesty as to what has passed with Sir R. Peel"? Did he have in mind what he had said to Anson about the necessity of the Queen being cautious in giving a verbal decision and about her not allowing herself to be *driven into a corner*? Did

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 306.

he desire to know what had occurred in order that, in ceasing to be Prime Minister, he could govern without responsibility to Parliament as the Censor of his successor?

CHAPTER XIV

THE PASSING OF LEHZEN

FAR from resenting this intrusion, the Queen submitted to Melbourne a lengthy report of her first interview with Peel. The significant statement occurs in it that "the Queen . . . then stated (to Peel) exactly what Lord Melbourne wrote".[1] Acknowledgment of receipt of this mark of the Royal favour was sent on 31 August 1841. The new Premier was again received on 1 September 1841 and the Regius Professor once more fully apprised of what had taken place. He replied that "he received Your Majesty's letter yesterday evening, and was very glad to learn from it that Your Majesty was not ill satisfied with Sir Robert Peel, and that arrangements were going on smoothly, which it is highly desirable that they should".[2]

Not content with indulging in such glittering generalities, Melbourne gave the Queen some suggestions about honours and, in concluding, wrote:

"As long as Your Majesty is desirous of receiving his communications he will be always most careful to give Your Majesty his impartial opinion and the best advice which he has to offer."[3] The

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 309.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 314.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 315.

next day the language used in expressing this same idea was more explicit:

"Your Majesty may rest assured of Lord Melbourne's devoted and disinterested attachment to Your Majesty, and that he will devote himself to giving to Your Majesty such information and advice as may be serviceable to Your Majesty with the sole view of promoting Your Majesty's public interests and private happiness." [1]

On 5 September 1841 Melbourne wrote to the effect that if he heard anything of any interest he would hasten to advise the Queen of it.[2] In other words, when Stockmar reached London, Victoria and her former Prime Minister were in active correspondence, which was not confined to matters affecting "private concerns and family concerns" but which embraced "public interests and private happiness" and would be extended indefinitely if anything of moment presented itself.

Everything tends to show that Albert, Melbourne and Anson were unconscious of the full import of what was taking place. Albert was then so completely dominated by his Royal spouse and so intimidated by Lehzen that he dared not express criticism. And, besides, he had suggested to the veteran statesman that close contact should be maintained with the Queen. He failed to grasp the dangerous potentialities latent in his suggestion.

Melbourne was infatuated with himself, lured on by the music of his own voice and flattered by the

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 316. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 317.

smiles with which Victoria greeted him. He fell, and his vanity prevented him from knowing that he had fallen. And Anson, while a public servant of parts, remained essentially a Secretary. It did not enter into his head to question the propriety of his delivering the letters that passed between his Sovereign and his former Chief. He enjoyed his task of being a letter-carrier to royalty.

If these three men were groping in the dark, Stockmar saw the light. He explained to Anson that he considered that the whole procedure was one of the greatest possible danger, especially to Melbourne. He pointed out that the former Prime Minister was still the head of the Whigs and that that fact emphasized the seriousness of what was taking place. He insisted that it was folly to believe that the matter could be kept a secret. He made it clear that it was his desire that Melbourne should be acquainted with all that had been said in this conversation.[1]

The minutes of this interview between Stockmar and Anson have been drawn up by the latter, who does not place stress upon the fact that he was courteously but, nevertheless, firmly taken to task for not having seen the danger of what was going on before his eyes and in which he was playing an humble part. This is said because the *memorandum* contains this naive admission: "I said I reconciled it (the correspondence) to myself because I felt that it had been productive of much good and no harm—and that, feeling it was conducted on such honourable terms, I should not, if

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 331.

it were necessary, scruple to acquaint Sir Robert Peel of its existence." [1]

The childlike innocence of this reply brought a retort from Stockmar which shows how thoroughly he went to the bottom of things. He said that Peel would unquestionably resent this exchange of letters and would at first be tempted to insist upon its immediate cessation. But, continued the Baron in substance, "I know Peel. His instincts are those of a gentleman. He is also most politic. He would see the wisdom of assuming an attitude of forbearance, of generosity, of magnanimity. He would say he felt all was honourably intended and that he had no objection."

Stockmar took this stand because he had given great thought to the study of the Constitutional history of England. He was not deeply concerned with the maintenance of sympathetic harmony between Melbourne and Peel. But he was concerned with the repercussion which the Tory Prime Minister's inevitable distrust of the Whig leader would have upon the relations between Victoria and her official advisers. He was a great believer in buttressing the power of the Crown. He went so far that, on one occasion, he defended the right of the Throne "to assert itself as permanent head of the Council over the temporary leader of the Ministry".[2] Holding such principles, it was anathema to him to think that circumstances might arise when Peel would be tempted to coerce Victoria to doing something

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 331.
[2] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 315.

repellent to her upon the mistaken assumption that her conduct was inspired by Melbourne.

Having apprised Anson of the grave peril attendant upon this correspondence and having assured himself that knowledge of this fact would be brought to Melbourne's attention, Stockmar bided his time. He did not consider it opportune to incur the risk of humiliating his old friend by taking up the matter with the Whig statesman in person, if the proper result could be achieved through the Prince's Private Secretary. He preferred, after his interview with Anson, to do nothing, cherishing the hope that the correspondence would cease.

But such tact was of no avail. Melbourne became more and more enamoured of his new post of super-Prime Minister or unofficial Censor of the Tory Premier. The babbling of his earlier letters which, when the Whig Ministry was tottering, had made the major point of a note the statement that "Lord Melbourne is very glad to hear of the Princess's tooth",[1] gave way to higher politics.

On 28 September 1841—a week after Stockmar's warning—he wrote to the Queen that "the diplomatic appointments are as well as they could make".[2] After having damned, with faint praise, those selected by the Foreign Office, he added, "at least, Lord Melbourne thinks so—at least as much in consequence of those whom they exclude, as of those whom they admit". And, not content with making this disparaging remark, he criticized the Tory diplomatic assignments observing that "the Duke of Beaufort will do better for Petersburgh

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 297. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 333.

than for Vienna. He is barely equal to the place, which requires a clever man, it being more difficult to get information there . . . than in any other country in Europe." [1]

It may be that Stockmar did not learn at once of the highly inflammable material compressed into this letter. It is quite probable that Victoria, who was perfectly unconscious of the fact that she was doing wrong, showed it to Albert in due course and that he repeated its contents to Stockmar, who thereby learnt that Melbourne was going from bad to worse. But this note did not bear evidence of that disconcerting loquacity which bespeaks the vain man endeavouring to ingratiate himself into the favour of a young woman, which was the psychological problem with which the Baron had to deal.

Whatever illusions Stockmar may have had upon this score, whatever hopes he may have cherished that Melbourne was not acting with that kittenish levity which men of sixty love to display when paying court to youth, were soon dispelled. Three days later another letter reached the Queen, and it may be assumed that its contents were eventually communicated to the Baron by the Prince. It began upon this note:

"Lord Melbourne . . . cannot express to Your Majesty how much obliged he feels by Your Majesty's taking the trouble to give him so much information upon so many points. Ste Aulaire's hair-powder seems to make a very deep impression. Everybody talks about it. 'He appears to be very

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p 333.

amiable and agreeable', everybody says; but then adds, 'I never saw a man wear so much powder.' A head so whitened with flour is quite a novelty and a prodigy in these times. Lord Melbourne has not yet seen him but means to call upon him immediately." [1]

This letter also deals with politics. It discusses many questions of national importance. Its concluding paragraph announces that Melbourne would spend the next week at Wimbledon as the guest of the Duke of Somerset. Its last words are: "The Duchess has many merits, but amongst them is the not small one of having one of the best cooks in England." [2]

It became obvious to Stockmar that Melbourne took too much pleasure in writing these letters to stop doing so unless ordered by the Queen to cease corresponding with her. Conscious of the peril that lurked in them, he concentrated his attention upon devising ways and means of solving the problem which this unconstitutional practice made acute.

The Baron's analysis of the situation convinced him that the besetting difficulty arose from the fact that Albert was not the master in the Royal household. He decided that even if he succeeded in getting Melbourne to see the light, he would have dealt with only one phase of the trouble.

It is obvious that Albert poured out his soul to Stockmar. The first volumes of Martin's *Life of the Prince Consort*, not to speak of Grey's *Early Years* or the *Denkwürdigkeiten*, contain scores of

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 334. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 335.

letters which bear witness to the intimacy of their friendship. Here, moreover, is what the Prince wrote to Prince Löwenstein, in May 1840: "In my home life I am very happy and contented; but the difficulty in filling my place with the proper dignity is, that I am only the husband, not the master in the house."[1] Attempts were made, he said in another letter, to deny him "even in the domestic circle, that authority which in private families belongs to the husband, and without which there cannot be true comfort and happiness in domestic life".[2]

Many a man has carried his cross without complaining and has become accustomed to it and even got to like it, but when a young husband, who dearly loved his wife's sceptre and who was also fond of her and who knew that she adored him, in her way, went so far as to write these letters, it is obvious that Stockmar, who was Albert's confidant and in close touch with him, knew that the situation in the Royal family circle was becoming intolerable.

Here, again, the Baron's clinical experience dictated his line of conduct. He diagnosed his case. His investigation confirmed what he had all along suspected. It was that the trouble with which he was confronted was due to a specific source of infection. In a word, he made up his mind that Lehzen was the disturbing element in the Royal household and that she must go.

It has not been forgotten how, in describing the

[1] *Early Years*, p. 319.
[2] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 71.

events of that epoch-making day on which a girl of eighteen was awakened one morning at six and went alone (only in her dressing-gown) into her sitting-room to learn that she was Queen of England, Victoria closed her *Journal* entry with these words: "Saw Stockmar. Went down and said good night to Mama, etc. My *dear* Lehzen will *always* remain with me as my friend, but will take no situation about me, and I think she is right." [1] If the Queen thus thought that the Baroness contemplated playing the part of a modest Violet and of making her influence felt only by the fragrance associated with her presence, it is quite clear that Lehzen preferred to be a Forget-me-not. This is brought out in the *Life of the Prince Consort*, where it is explained that:

"A mistake, it was soon found, had also been made in not establishing the Prince from the first as Private Secretary of the Queen, and placing the internal arrangements of the Royal Household under his immediate control. These functions had, since the Queen's Accession, been to a great extent, discharged by the Baroness Lehzen, Her Majesty's former governess, and they invested her with powers which, however discreetly used, were calculated to bring her into collision with the natural head of the household." [2]

No greater tribute can be paid to the deftness of Stockmar's skill and discretion than the fact that Chancellor, a recent biographer of the Prince Consort, after setting forth that Lehzen was an

[1] *Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, vol. I, p. 198.
[2] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 71.

obstacle to Albert's domestic happiness, adds: "the exact means by which this lady's removal was effected are not known; but in the autumn of 1842 she left Windsor for her health and proceeded to Germany, whence she never returned. Albert was now supreme." [1] Bolitho makes more or less the same statement when he writes that: "All through the year of 1842 new changes brought new peace to the Court. Baroness Lehzen went back to Hanover and with her went one of the most unfortunate influences in the Queen's married life. She may have been excellent as a Governess but she had no place in the family of the Queen and Prince." [2]

It was just like Stockmar to do his work so adroitly that he left no trace of his handicraft. What he desired was to assure the happiness of Victoria and Albert and of their children and to build up the Prince's position as head of the Royal Household so that extraneous influences such as Lehzen's domination and Melbourne's advice could be supplanted by a husband's counsel and a Prime Minister's authority.

What Albert needed to counteract Lehzen's influence was Stockmar's presence to give him the necessary moral backbone. He had been afraid to face the consequences of an "exciting scene" when Melbourne had suggested on 29 August 1841 that the Baroness should be assimilated to a Lady

[1] *The Prince Consort*, by Frank B. Chancellor (London: Philip Allan, 1931), p. 85.

[2] *Albert the Good*, by Hector Bolitho (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1932), p. 110.

of the Bedchamber and asked to retire. But with the Baron at hand to afford him support and to comfort him he became a different man and no longer feared to assert his personality.

It was not actually until the autumn of 1842 that Lehzen " left Windsor for her health and proceeded to Germany, whence she never returned ", but Stockmar saw, long before her lares were transferred to Hanover, that the sun of her influence had set and that her days were numbered. He was thus able to concentrate his attention upon Melbourne's injudicious conduct, conscious that Leopold's indiscretion would also soon cease now that Albert's star was so obviously in the ascendant.

It was, however, clear to Stockmar that he, and nobody else, could bring the Whig politician into line. Anson had failed as an intermediary and Albert did not have the stamina to confront both Melbourne and Lehzen at the same time. In fact, it required an occasional subcutaneous injection of courage to embolden the Prince to persist in his efforts to get rid of the Baroness. When a husband has once been browbeaten by his wife, he may have " all the blood of all the Howards " in his veins, but he is like a burnt cat—he dreads the fire. If the Baron was able to get Albert to do " what he knew would be painful " [1]—to repeat what the Prince said on 29 August 1841—it could not be expected that so harassed a man would take on a second contest when he had to be stimulated to make him face the consequences of the more pressing one.

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 303.

When the Baron was carefully observing the current of events and awaiting a favourable opportunity to put an end to this pernicious correspondence, Melbourne not only kept on writing but made a strong speech in Parliament against the Government.[1] The stress thus placed on the fact that he was a party leader and, as such, doubly prevented from communicating in secret with his Sovereign upon public matters, so incensed the stolid Stockmar that he drew up a memorandum and instructed Anson to bring it at once to the delinquent, "to read it aloud to Melbourne and orally to add what amplifications might be necessary".[2]

However phlegmatic the Baron may have been, despite the ravages of his dyspepsia, he lost his head on this occasion. The note which he prepared for submission to the offending statesman shows that he was so highly incensed that he forgot how to write English. His anger took on a German accent. He became, for the moment, not the self-restrained mentor of royalty but the irate Teuton who was bent upon hammering a question of English Constitutional law into the obtuse head of an English statesman whose shortcoming, if made public, would undermine the stability of the English Monarchy. His memorandum in its unexpurgated version reads:

"Sir Robert Peel has yet to make his position opposite[3] the Queen, which for him to obtain is important and desirable for obvious reasons. I

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 339. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 340.
[3] This word is used in the text.

have good cause to doubt that Sir Robert is sure within himself of the good-will and confidence of the Queen. As long as the secret communication exists between Her Majesty and Lord Melbourne, this ground, upon which alone Sir Robert could obtain the position necessary to him as Premier, must remain cut away from under his feet. I hold, therefore, this secret interchange an *essential injustice* to Sir Robert's present position. . . . In this particular matter nobody has paramount power to do right or wrong but the Queen, and more particularly Lord Melbourne himself. To any danger which may come out of this to Her Majesty's character, the caution and objection must come from him and from him alone." [1]

However guttural Stockmar's English may have been when his anger was aroused, his meaning is obvious. His sincerity is, indeed, emphasized by the shortcomings of his language, and Melbourne so clearly understood the message that, on reading it, he exclaimed : " This is a most decided opinion indeed, quite an *apple opinion*," [2] although the editor of Queen Victoria's *Letters* adds a footnote to bring out that " no doubt Lord Melbourne said ' an apple-pie opinion '." [3]

Anson, encouraged by Stockmar's memorandum and, perhaps, fearing to face the irate German unless he could assure him that Melbourne had promised to cease the baneful correspondence, pressed home the point made in the note to such an extent that the peevish politician finally could

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 340. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 340 (note).

restrain himself no longer " and went up and down the room in a violent frenzy exclaiming, ' God eternally damn it !, etc. etc. Flesh and blood cannot stand this. I only spoke upon the defensive, which Ripon's speech at the beginning of the session rendered quite necessary. I cannot be expected to give up my position in the country, neither do I think that it is to the Queen's interest that I should.' " [1]

It is obvious that while Melbourne had thoroughly understood that Stockmar was lecturing him, he had failed to grasp the full import of the point emphasized in Stockmar's memorandum. The Baron was not making an issue of the fact that the Whig leader had taken up the cudgels for the opposition in the recent debate. No objection was addressed to Melbourne's fighting his party's battles at the head of the column. The criticism was advanced that an attitude of militant partisanship accentuated the impropriety of the secret correspondence. The evil resided not in the bold advocacy of factional measures in the Lords but in the occult counsel given the Sovereign in a surreptitious manner.

Anson endeavoured to explain all this to Melbourne, telling him that Stockmar thought that no Ministry could stand the force of such an undercurrent and that all the good which had been accomplished in reconciling the Queen to the change of Ministry was being undermined by this subversive correspondence. Encouraged by the fact that his former Chief did not burst into another

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 341.

tantrum when this was brought out, Albert's Secretary asked Melbourne whether he saw any danger likely to arise from this exchange of letters.

"After a long pause", reads the official memorandum, "he (Melbourne) said, 'I *certainly cannot think it right*,' though he felt sure some medium of communication of this sort was no new precedent. He took care never to say anything which could bring his opinion in opposition to *Sir Robert's and he should distinctly advise the Queen to adhere to her Ministers in everything, unless he saw the time had arrived at which* it might be resisted." [1]

Anson, who began to feel more sure of himself as this exchange of views continued, replied that Stockmar held that the principal evil to be dreaded from the continuance of Melbourne's intervention was that as long as the Queen felt that she could resort to her former Prime Minister for advice she would never be disposed to place in her present Premier that trust which the Constitution made imperative.[2] On this note the interview between Melbourne and Anson came to an end.

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 342.

CHAPTER XV

THE RULE OF PEEL

HAD Melbourne been a young man, or had he been an old man with a strong-minded wife, this remonstrance addressed to him by Anson in Stockmar's name would have put an end to his waywardness. He knew that he was doing wrong. But the self-willed vanity of a beau who feels that he is on the decline gained the upper hand over his better nature and caused him to persevere in his misconduct.

Two days after having been made to understand that "this secret interchange (was) an *essential injustice* to Sir Robert's present position" Melbourne returned to the attack in quite a lengthy note which concluded with a paragraph in which he described a woman who had certain of his characteristics. He said of her—as others might well have said of him:

"Lady A—— is, as Your Majesty says, good-natured. She talks three or four times as much as she ought, and like many such women often says exactly the things she ought not to say." [1]

Such trivial observations would not have worried Stockmar. But Melbourne later went on to discuss the validity of the claim of a peer to a right to be

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 344.

received in audience by the Sovereign. He began by remarking that "Sir Robert Peel is probably right in supposing that this pretension originated in early times."[1] After carefully considering the subject from various angles, Stockmar reached the conclusion that it would be best to concede the privilege.

Four days passed and Melbourne showed that nothing could be done with him. He approved of Lord Ellenborough's appointment as Governor-General of India[2] and sanctioned the choice of Lord Fitzgerald for the Board of Control.[3] But petty gossip was all he could think of when he wrote on 21 October 1841. He brought his account to an end by saying that "Lord Melbourne thinks that it will gratify Lord Leicester to see Lord Melbourne again. . . . The only annoyance is that it (Lord Leicester's estate) is close to Lord and Lady G—— whom he will be perpetually meeting."[4]

This was the last straw. Stockmar's patience was shattered. He determined to bring matters to a head by arranging for an interview with Melbourne. A day or so may have elapsed before knowledge of the contents of this letter of 21 October 1841 reached him through Albert. All that is known is that on 25 October 1841 a *memorandum* was drawn up by the Baron which begins in these words:

"I told Lord Melbourne that, as I read the English Constitution it meant to assign to the *Sovereign in his functions a deliberative part*—that I was

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 343.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 346.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 347.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 350.

not sure the Queen had the means within herself to execute this deliberative part properly, but I was sure the only way for her to execute her functions at all was to be strictly honest to those men who at the time being were her Ministers. That it was chiefly on this account that I had been so very sorry to have found now . . . that on the change of the Ministry a capital opportunity had not only been lost by Lord Melbourne, but that he had himself turned an instrument for working great good into an instrument which must produce mischief and danger." [1]

There was nothing ambiguous about this language. And throughout the interview Stockmar struck the same chord. He did not hesitate to say that Melbourne had "been so weak as to have allowed himself to be driven, *against his own and better* conviction",[2] into a false position. He spoke of the "pernicious bias" that the Queen must have received from this injudicious attitude and, after reviewing the historical aspects of the matter, he stated, in so many words, that "it would be impossible to carry on this secret commerce with the Sovereign for any length of time without exposing the Queen's character and creating mighty embarrassments in the quiet and regular workings of a constitutional machine".[3]

Stockmar was genuinely fond of Melbourne. Their friendship was of long standing and their intimacy was strengthened by the ties of devotion which linked both of them to Victoria. This

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 352. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 353.
[3] *Ibid.*

esteem and the comradeship that went with it, made it especially galling to the Baron to see the man whose honour he did not question, whose patriotism he did not doubt and whose loyalty he knew, not only acting so inanely but undermining the Queen's Throne. He delivered such direct blows during their conversation, put such driving power behind them and followed them up so remorselessly that he felt ill at ease when "Melbourne became visibly nervous, perplexed and distressed".[1]

Ever kind-hearted, but determined to drive home his point, Stockmar sought for a means of safeguarding his friend's pride. His medical training at once asserted itself. He knew that Victoria was again about to become a mother. He saw that nature would interpose for a time an impossible barrier between her and the kind-hearted old gentleman whose sense of propriety had recently been so faulty. The Baron, therefore, hastened to say:

"You allow the Queen's confinement to pass over quietly, and you wait till her perfect recovery of it. As soon as this period has arrived, you state of your accord to Her Majesty that this secret and confidential correspondence with her must cease; that you gave in to it, much against your feelings . . . and to prevent the ill effects which great and mental agitation might have produced on her health. That this part of your purpose now being most happily achieved, you thought yourself in duty bound to advise Her Majesty to *cease all her*

[1] *Ibid.*

communications to you on political subjects, as you felt it wrong within yourself to receive them." [1]

Stockmar did not display his wonted skill in thus seeking to assuage the feelings of his listener by suggesting a graceful exit from an untenable position. If it be a fact—and it is the Baron himself who has recorded it—that Melbourne became "visibly nervous, perplexed and distressed" when the barrage of argument was concentrated on him, the display of so much tact was like an overdose of certain drugs. It produced nausea but did not give the relief that was expected. If, therefore, Stockmar felt that he had carried his point and that all was well, the very next day, 26 October 1841, a letter was addressed to the Queen which began:

"Lord Melbourne presents his humble duty to Your Majesty. . . . It certainly is a very unfortunate thing that Queen Christina was encouraged to fix her residence at Paris, and the suspicion arising, therefore, cannot but be very injurious both to the King of the French and to the French nation." [2]

On the first, fourth, fifth and seventh of November 1841 Melbourne was hard at work commenting on higher politics in somewhat lengthy notes addressed to the Queen. The last contains the significant statement that "Your Majesty may rest assured that he (Lord Melbourne) will always speak to Your Majesty without scruple or reserve, and that he will never ask anything of Your Majesty, or ever make a suggestion, which he

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 354. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 354.

does not consider to be for Your Majesty's service and advantage." [1]

We are again confronted with the difficulty of being unable to fix the exact date when the contents of this letter of 7 November 1841 were first made known to Stockmar. The Prince of Wales, Edward VII, was born on 9 November 1841. It is quite probable that the Queen herself did not read this note until quite a while after the great event. It is known that Victoria recovered rapidly, so quickly in fact that on 21 November 1841, the birthday of the Princess Royal, she wrote in her "Diary" that "Albert brought in dearest little Pussy (the Princess Royal) in such a smart white merino dress trimmed with blue, which Mama had given her, and a pretty cap and placed her on my bed, seating himself next to her and she was very dear and good." It is assumed that Melbourne's correspondence had not been submitted to her much before that day. And it is almost certain that the Prince had not dared to open the envelope without the Queen's specific instructions.

These circumstances account for the fact that it was not until 23 November 1841 that Stockmar called Melbourne's attention to the flagrant dereliction. The Baron hesitated to take up the matter with Melbourne in person, fearing that something might be said at the interview which would put an end to their friendship. He sat down and, in the quiet of his study, prepared a lengthy *memorandum* which he read and rewrote

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 360.

until it not only expressed his views but betrayed little trace of excitement in the form of too obvious German idioms.

The note bears the date of 23 November 1841 and thus follows almost immediately on the Princess Royal's birthday party. It goes right to the heart of the problem with which Stockmar was so deeply concerned, beginning by saying that: "the apprehension which haunts me since my return to England is well known to you. . . . From your own expressions, used some time back, I was led to expect that you would be glad to take advantage of *any fair opportunity* which might contribute towards that devoutly to be wished for object, viz.: to let a certain correspondence die a natural death. You may easily conceive how much I felt disappointed when I heard that you had written again, without a challenge, and that, without apparent cause, you had volunteered to write again." [1]

Between the lines of Stockmar's *memorandum* it seems to be quite clear that Melbourne had told Anson that there was no possible danger involved in this correspondence for the best of all reasons, that nobody knew of it outside of Anson, himself, the most discreet of letter carriers. In order to show the utter folly of any such assumption the Baron brought out that he had met a man a few days ago who, after a few moments' general conversation, had said quite abruptly: "so I find the Queen is in daily correspondence with Lord Melbourne". To this Stockmar said he had answered:

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 360.

"Who told you this?" and had received the reply: "Mrs. Norton; she told me the other evening." [1]

After having shown that the correspondence was known about town, Stockmar spoke to Melbourne of a recent conversation in which Peel had almost gone out of his way to say: "On this I must insist and I do assure you that that moment I was to learn that the Queen takes advice, upon public matters in another place, I shall throw up; for such a thing I conceive the country would not stand, and I would not remain an hour, whatever the consequences of my resignation may be." [2]

From these two occurrences the Baron drew the inference that the danger of a public scandal was great and imminent. He sought to show in what an impossible position such an explosion would place Victoria. He put this brutal question to Melbourne: "Can you hope that the Queen's character will ever recover from a shock received by a collision with Peel, upon such a cause?" [3]

Even after this letter Melbourne remained incorrigible. But Stockmar found in the growing effacement of Lehzen and in the expanding influence of Albert, satisfactory proof that the old gentleman was wasting time writing so frequently and so freely. He saw in the establishment of close relations between the Prince and Peel the best of evidence that the Prime Minister no longer had any reason to doubt having access to the Royal ear. It is quite probable, however, that notwithstanding these encouraging circumstances his con-

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 361. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 362. [3] *Ibid.*

ception of duty would have urged him to wipe out the element of risk which lurked in the maintenance of this correspondence, if about this time his health had not become seriously impaired. It is in one of Melbourne's letters to the Queen, written at this epoch, that we read :

"Lord Melbourne is very much concerned to hear of the Baron's illness—very much indeed ; he is an excellent and most valuable man, with one of the soundest and coolest judgments that Lord Melbourne has ever met with. Your Majesty knows that Lord Melbourne has never had a favourable opinion of his health. There seems to be about him a settled weakness of the stomach, which is in fact the seat of health, strength, thought and life. Lord Melbourne sees that a great physician says that Napoleon lost the battle of Leipzic in consequence of some very greasy soup which he ate the day before and which clouded his judgment and obscured his preceptions." [1]

Whatever may have been the extent of the weakness of Stockmar's stomach, and however much the organs of digestion may be "the seat of health, strength, thought and life", it is obvious that in all this discussion with Melbourne he was in the right. It seems almost impossible to believe that it was he, a German, who defended the British Constitution and that he was called upon to do so against a statesman who had played an honourable part in adding lustre to one of the great reigns of English history.

A striking feature of this exceptional performance

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. I, p. 392.

is the noteworthy circumstance that the Baron's *Journal*, his *Denkwürdigkeiten*, observes a discreet silence on this matter. Queen Victoria's *Letters*, not Stockmar's pen, reveal what England owes in this particular to the German dyspeptic. His discretion in failing to record a word of what had transpired between Melbourne and him in regard to this entire problem furnishes irrefutable proof not only of his tact but of his recognition of the extremely confidential nature of his delicate task. The self-effacement here practised affords probably the best single available example of Stockmar's sense of responsibility.

If Melbourne commiserated with Stockmar for having a bad stomach, it was not the Baron's indigestion but his own stroke of apoplexy which saved Melbourne from impending humiliation. When Stockmar recovered Melbourne was partially paralysed and Stockmar had not the heart to rebuke him. His major objective had been attained. The Prince and Peel had become such close friends that there now seemed no danger of a misunderstanding between the Crown and the Ministry.

Stockmar had foreseen that the passing of Lehzen would mean that Albert would be called on to replace her in the superintendence of the Royal Household and in taking charge of the many details connected with the office of Privy Purse which were then in her hands.[1] A great believer in the principle of taking time by the forelock, the Baron had, with his wonted thoroughness and foresight, drawn up as early as January 1841 a plan, as he expressed it, "to unite the greater

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 153.

security and comfort of the Sovereign with greater regularity and better discipline of the Royal Establishment".[1] He could not foretell just when Lehzen would disappear beyond the horizon. All that he knew for certain was that there was not room enough under the same roof for her and the Prince.

With his *memorandum* for dealing with the emergency which Lehzen's elimination would bring to the fore safely hidden away among his private papers, Stockmar was detained at Coburg by ill-health during the earlier months when Albert sought to wrestle with his enlarged opportunities. We suspect that he may have exaggerated his indisposition in order to compel the Prince to act upon his own initiative. It should not be forgotten that he loved Albert with the affection of a father and that he may have felt that it was in the interests of the young couple that he should be away during the crucial period of readjustment which was bound to follow the retirement of the Baroness.

Be this as it may, on 27 December 1842 the Prince wrote Stockmar that "we have reached a critical transition period. . . . I feel the necessity for the wise counsel and support of a man of experience. When you left us, you said to me, 'When you really want me write, and I will come.' I am well aware of what you are to your family and I have therefore been unwilling till now to importune you to come so soon. But now the moment is come, when I think I may venture to remind you of your promise, therefore do not delay."[2]

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 154. [2] *Ibid.*

The summons brought Stockmar hurrying to England. We have already seen that Melbourne had remarked that the Baron always knew when to leave. This letter, conveying to him the best of new year's greetings for 1843, shows that he also understood the art of having others seek his presence.

It is difficult now to grasp the seriousness of the problem that summoned Stockmar to England. So smooth in its workings is the Royal Household to-day, so thoroughly is it under control, that it is not easy to picture the task which confronted the Prince. When Victoria came to the Throne confusion reigned supreme. Lehzen did nothing to correct an intolerable condition, or, to be more accurate, confronted by a task of overwhelming magnitude, she marked time as best she could. A foreigner with no imposing ancestry and holding a more or less undefined post, she cannot be blamed if she hesitated to apply draconian measures to English aristocrats entrenched in power.

The Hanoverian Baroness found herself confronted with three great English officers of State, the Lord Stewart, the Lord Chamberlain and the Master of the Horse, all of whom were party favourites and each of whom had a governing voice in the Household. These political hacks—because that is what they were, however blue may have been their blood and however intolerant may have been their pride of ancestry—had rules of administration as various as their individual capacity—or shortcomings.

No uniformity of system prevailed. No general understanding harmonized the working of the

several departments. No tradition brought order out of chaos. And, to make matters worse, there was no responsible officer who resided at the palace to represent the decorative place-hunters who did nothing to earn their pay.[1]

The net result of all these evils with which Lehzen was confronted was that Stockmar pointed out in his *memorandum* that :

"The Lord Stewart finds the fuel and lays the fire and the Lord Chamberlain lights it. . . . "In the same manner the Lord Chamberlain provides all the lamps, and the Lord Stewart must clean, trim and light them. . . . As neither the Lord Chamberlain nor the Master of the Horse have a regular deputy residing in the Palace, more than two-thirds of all the male and female servants are left without a master in the house. They can come on and go off duty as they choose, they can remain absent hours and hours on their days of waiting, or they may commit any excess or irregularity ; there is nobody to observe, correct or to reprimand them." [2]

This intolerable situation continued to exist not because Lehzen was unworthy of her responsibilities but because reforms in the Royal Household were not palatable to either of the great political parties of the State. The incompetent nobles who occupied the gilded posts at the top of the ladder had their partisans in high places. So had their indolent underlings on the lower rungs who were able to enlist support to buttress them in their sinecures.

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 156.
[2] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 407.

Had not a strange young lad, by name Jones, been discovered at one o'clock in the morning under a sofa in an apartment adjoining the Queen's bedroom, matters might have drifted along indefinitely. The warning by such a lesson told Victoria that an intolerable situation existed that demanded a remedy.

The discovery that this boy had apparently entered the Palace by climbing over the garden wall and walking in through an open window and the circumstance that he spoke of other occasions when he had " sat upon the throne, seen the Queen and heard the Princess Royal squall " made it obvious that something had to be done to bring about the needed reform. As soon as Lehzen's health called her to Hanover the Prince undertook the task and found in Stockmar's *memorandum* the requisite guidance.

The plan evolved by the Baron was quite simple. Its dominant principle was that of indivisible responsibility. A single official, the Master of the Household, became answerable for the entire management of the Royal Palaces. Numerous economies resulted in checking obvious extravagances, but the maxim of holding one man primarily accountable for everything and making his subordinates report to him was the keynote of the necessary but simple reform.

CHAPTER XVI

PALMERSTON

ALBERT and Peel had many things in common. Both were reserved, patient, conscientious and unimaginative.[1] They were ambitious but their aspirations did not clash. Their friendship grew apace and the Prime Minister soon realized that as the Prince required some outlet for his energy, a post should be found for him. It was first proposed that he should be appointed Commander-in-Chief of the army in the event of the demise of the Duke of Wellington. Stockmar strongly disapproved of the suggestion, and, when it was put forward as a concrete proposition in 1850, this veto was reasserted.[2]

The Baron held that the command of the British army should be placed in other hands, but he believed so strongly that use should be made of Albert's ability and zeal that from almost the first day of his return to England, in September 1841, he carried on long negotiations with Peel looking not only towards the re-establishment of the constitutional authority of the Queen but towards defining the position of her Consort.

It was Stockmar's maxim that the Prince is the

[1] *The Prince Consort*, by Chancellor, p. 86.

[2] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 150, and Vol. II, p. 263.

"necessary Private Secretary of the Queen". Lord Grey, Abercromby and Lord John Russell agreed with him. Peel refrained from expressing an opinion but raised no objection to Albert being Victoria's Private Secretary *de facto*.[1] Stockmar urged that advantage should be taken of the first opportunity to obtain legal sanction for a situation which met with general tacit approval. He favoured the passage of a Bill defining the rights and duties of a Prince Consort.

In adopting this attitude Stockmar advocated a compromise between Victoria, who desired that the title of King should be bestowed upon the Prince,[2] and Peel who preferred everything to be left delightfully vague. The situation reached such a point that Lady Palmerston was reported to have said: "If Peel listens to the Queen, he will be beaten in Parliament. If he opposes her wishes, there will be a breach between her and him."[3] It was to avoid such a dilemma that the Baron had proposed a middle course.

Luckily Victoria was too intelligent and Peel too prudent for matters to go as far as Lady Palmerston had prophesied. There was no need to resort to the expedient suggested by Stockmar. The result was that while nothing was done to regulate by law the status of the Prince, he continued to act as the Queen's Private Secretary and intimate Counsellor and was present at all audiences of the Ministers. The friendly relations between him and Peel lent emphasis to his undefined position. Stockmar had the satisfaction of knowing that his

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 667. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

spiritual son had become a factor in the government of England.

In the course of time, complaint was made of Albert's unconstitutional interference in political matters. It was argued that he was only an irresponsible individual without official status. Matters reached such a point that the subject was discussed with great learning and not a little feeling in both Houses of Parliament. The outcome satisfied the Prince but not Stockmar, who thus expressed his dissent:

"When the storm first began, I asserted my old opinion, as against the Ministers. For this purpose I wrote the secret history of the earlier negotiations on this point. I see in the Parliamentary debates that Lord Aberdeen, and still more Lord John Russell have availed themselves of many points of my disclosures. But Ministers have not shown themselves as firm as I should have wished, and as, without any danger, they might have been. The only one who was not afraid to affirm that the husband is necessarily the *alter ego* of the wife, was the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Campbell." [1]

If Stockmar devoted himself to extending Albert's zone of action from the Boudoir to the Council chamber, it was because he was thinking not of the Prince but of the Queen. However great may have become his love for Albert, Victoria held the first place in his heart. She had won his affection as a little girl, as the youthful heiress to Britain's throne. And it was as Victoria's husband that the Prince had attracted Stockmar. He had

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 673.

opposed Victoria's domestic tyranny, and striven to curtail Lehzen's influence and make Albert the dominant factor in the family circle, because the happiness of the young couple left him no alternative.

As early as 27 December 1845 Stockmar argued that since 1830 the executive power has been entirely in the hands of the House of Commons. This, he held, was not only a perversion of the fundamental idea of the English Constitution, but created a situation fraught with great danger to the State. Stockmar said that the head of the Ministry is a party leader who is apt to subordinate the weal of the nation to what is thought to be the welfare of a faction. The Throne, he insisted, is now powerless to counteract this injurious tendency because the practice which has prevailed since 1830 tends to relegate the Sovereign to a part inconsistent with the original spirit of the Constitution. "Still," said the Baron, "the right of the Crown to assert itself as a permanent head of the Council over the temporary leader of the Ministry, and to act as such, is not likely to be gainsayed even by those who regard it through the spectacles of a party." [1]

Nine years later Stockmar went far more elaborately into the same subject in a letter to Albert. His recurring grievance is that the relationship between the Crown and the responsible Ministers has, especially since 1830, fallen more or less into an obscurity which leads to misconceptions and to absurd and mischievous assertions which are in-

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 315.

consistent with the subsistence of Constitutional Monarchy.[1]

Although Stockmar's views are put into the form of a letter, what he wrote was really a treatise on a phase of English Constitutional law. It is worthy of note that even if he was a German who had come to man's estate in the days of absolutism, even if he was an uncompromising Monarchist, yet he pleaded for Constitutionalism. He objected to the evolution of a Constitutional Monarchy into a purely Ministerial Government. He advanced the argument that one of the first duties of Ministers is to safeguard the Royal prerogative. And having laid down this predicate he asked :

"Are we to allow crack-brained sciolists in politics to deny to the Crown the right and power to keep Ministers to the fulfilment of their duty? Are we to suffer the Crown, and with it the entire commonweal, to come to destruction? And, in fact, again and again since the Reform Act we have had Ministers, who in defending the most unquestionable Crown rights, have shown nothing but lukewarmness, timidity and above all that *maladroitness which comes from the want of good will.*"[2]

Having made this frontal attack upon the politicians who fill the various Cabinet posts, the Baron hammered away at both Tories and Whigs. He was not writing for publication. His letter was addressed to Albert who was temperamentally hesitant, and who did his best cantering when urged on by the spur. The old Tories, who ruled

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. II, p. 545. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 546.

England before the days of the Reform Bill, won Stockmar's admiration for defending the prerogatives of the Crown notwithstanding the manifest shortcomings of the Hanoverian Kings. But, he continued, " these Tories have died out, and those who bear their name are simply degenerate bastards. Our Whigs are nothing but partly conscious, partly unconscious Republicans, who stand in the same relation to the Throne as the wolf does to the lamb ".[1]

Stockmar complained that the Whigs have a tendency to push constitutional fictions to extremes and, if let alone, will make of the King " *nothing but a mandarin* figure, which has to nod its head in assent or denial, as his Minister pleases ".[2] He considered this tendency dangerous to the State because its effect was to convert the existing Constitution into a bridge leading to a Republic. He held that to counteract this drift it was essential that no opportunity should be let slip of " vindicating the legitimate position of the Crown ".

What was " this legitimate position " ? In answering this question the Baron stressed the fact that one of the chief difficulties confronting every Prime Minister grows out of the obvious insecurity and brief tenure of office of a party leader and the impelling urge to give to the personal, selfish and transitory tendencies of the dominant majority precedence over the substantial interests of the country. The twaddle about Ministers being responsible to the nation for every fault will not, he insisted, keep matters straight. Ministerial responsi-

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 546. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 547.

bility for incapable or unscrupulous Ministers, he wrote, "is a mere bugbear".[1]

His cure for this evil was that the position of the Sovereign should be that of a permanent Premier, who takes rank above the temporary head of a Cabinet and, in matters of discipline, exercises supreme authority. He sought to illustrate his meaning by quoting what Palmerston once said to Lord John Russell: "I concede to the Minister not only the power to dismiss every member of the Cabinet but also the right to dismiss them without any explanation of his reasons."[2]

Stockmar did not close his eyes to the fact that his ideal made it necessary that everything should revolve around "the moral purity of the Sovereign" and that the impeccable moral atmosphere of the Court should act "as moral oil for the driving wheels of the Constitutional machine".[3] Such language savours of idealism and smacks of an altruism which subordinates everything to a beautiful theory. It should not be forgotten, however, that the dominant thought in all the Baron's dissertations upon English Constitutional law is that the Constitution makes it imperative that England's Sovereign be a man or a woman of the highest principles. He was obviously in favour of driving a worthless King or Queen into immediate exile. He was intolerant of a bad Monarch. It is for this reason that he wrote, as we have already seen:

"I love and honour the English Constitution from conviction, for I think that, under judicious

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. II, p. 548.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 550. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 550.

handling, it is capable of realizing a degree of legal, civil liberty which gives a man scope to think and act as a man. . . . In my eyes the English Constitution is the foundation, corner and cope-stone of all the political civilization of the human race, present and to come. Such being my views . . . must I desire to see its stability secured and its organic improvement developed."[1]

Stockmar's historical retrospect convinced him that during the half-century prior to 1831 the centre of gravity of the combined forces of the State was found in the Upper House. The Reform Act, in giving to the democratic element a preponderance in the Constitution over the aristocratic, removed it to the Commons and " thereby threw all political life into a state of feverish excitement and oscillation which was very apt to prove fatal to it ".[2]

The Baron's theory was that Peel's deft strategy had averted great dangers and that not only was the constitutional fabric in excellent shape but that providence had placed a moral Sovereign on the Throne. And, stressing this point, he added, " whether the Ministers, whether the Upper House was ever consciously aware, what a safeguard for them against the wild power of democracy had grown up in the moral purity of the Queen, I do not know ".[3]

Stockmar brings this essay to an end by pointing out that the task which was specially incumbent on the Prime Minister was to defend the well-deserved popularity of the Sovereign and that it

[1] *Ibid.* [2] *Ibid.*, p. 552. [3] *Ibid.*

behoved the Prince to do his utmost to have the Lords assume their right position in the Legislature and the fulfilment of their vocation as sagacious, liberal-minded and honourable men.[1]

Over eighty years have passed since these lines were written. The Lords did not do their duty as sagacious statesmen, however conscientiously they may have sought to do so as honourable men. They failed to see that the day would come, sooner or later, when they would be emasculated if they persisted in systematically throwing out the pet measures of the Liberals and in readily giving their approval to bills supported by the Conservatives.

The same propitious fate which had assured England a moral Sovereign when Stockmar made these comments has now given her nearly a century of such a blessing. The result is that the wisdom of the Baron's advice to the Prime Minister of his day is as apposite at the present moment as it was then. It is even more so. In 1854 the democratic spirit was still under-leash and the Crown was only one of the essential elements of the English Constitution.

The dawn of the twentieth century, on the contrary, saw the United Kingdom blended into the British Empire, destined to emerge, a few years later, as the British Commonwealth of Nations. No such congeries of free peoples can exist without a symbol common to all of them, without a tie that binds them together not with links of steel but with bonds of affection. Conflicting interests,

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. II, p. 553.

discordant policies and aggravating jealousies leave nothing which can hold them together except hearts attuned to love not merely the same flag but the same Monarch. That devotion to the Sovereign which Stockmar visualized in 1854 as the sheet anchor of the English Constitution may to-day play only a subordinate part in England herself, but it is now the one and only bulwark which can safeguard that greater achievement which he may not have foreseen but which, German though he was, he helped by his disinterestedness, his tenacity and his common sense, to make possible.

But, is it fair to Stockmar to suggest that his imagination did not conjure up the present wide expanse of the British Commonwealth of Nations? It is the spirit of adventure, the dauntless courage and the genius for self-government of the men and women of English blood which have brought this intangible entity into being. The Baron showed his ability to recognize these symptoms and to grasp their meaning when, during the darkest hour of the Indian Mutiny, he wrote to the Prince that "the events in India are a heavy domestic calamity for England. Yet, just because of this, there is less reason to despair, as the English people surpass all others in Europe in energy and vigour of character, and for strong men misfortune serves as a school for instruction and improvement".[1]

Stockmar's belief in the necessity of upholding the Royal prerogative and of being prepared to resist any assault on it caused the Queen to lean upon him when her relations with Palmerston

[1] *Ibid.*, vol. IV, p. 92.

became strained in the summer of 1850. The far-seeing Baron had not failed to note the storm clouds gathering on the horizon. When the Foreign Secretary was jauntily parading his rhetorical talents and enjoying his Parliamentary triumphs the plodding German was hard at work evolving a formula that would give concrete expression to Victoria's contention, which he may perhaps have inspired.

It was on 12 March 1852 that he prepared this *memorandum* :

" The least the Queen has a right to require of her Minister is :

(1) That he will distinctly state what he proposes in a given case, in order that the Queen may know as distinctly to what she has to give her royal sanction.

(2) Having given once her sanction to a measure, the Minister who, in the execution of such measure, alters or modifies it arbitrarily, commits an act of dishonesty towards the Crown, which the Queen has an undoubted constitutional right to visit with the dismissal of that Minister." [1]

It is all very well for one of Palmerston's recent biographers to call Stockmar " that *Eminence grise* of Coburg diplomacy ",[2] and to remark " the stern purpose gleams through the imperfect syntax ", but it was just this " stern purpose " and not literary phrases which England needed at that particular moment.

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. II, p. 238.

[2] *Palmerston*, by Philip Guedalla (London : Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1926), p. 273.

Palmerston was a fighter; Victoria was a self-willed woman. If she had not had Stockmar to explain to her the nature of her prerogatives and to put them before her in such an explicit manner, she might not have had the temerity to affront her redoubtable Minister and to stand her ground. We are even inclined to think that this "imperfect syntax" facilitated her grasp of Stockmar's meaning. It certainly lent his words a tone which made them doubly clear to the Prince Consort, who understood German better than he did English.

As a matter of fact, this *memorandum* was primarily intended for Victoria and Albert and nobody else. It also served its purpose in forcing Stockmar to co-ordinate his ideas and give them concrete expression. When the discussion grew hotter and hotter and Lord John Russell was drawn into it, all that the Queen had to do was to open a drawer and have her Secretary write him this note, which was dated Osborne, 12 August 1850:

"With reference to the conversation about Lord Palmerston which the Queen had with Lord John Russell the other day, and Lord Palmerston's disavowal that he ever intended any disrespect to her by the various neglects of which she has had so long and so often to complain, she thinks it right, in order to prevent any mistake for the future, shortly to explain what it is she expects from her Foreign Secretary.

She requires:

(1) That he will distinctly state what he proposes in a given case, in order that the Queen may

know as distinctly to what she has given her Royal sanction ;

(2) Having once given her sanction to a measure, that it be not arbitrarily altered or modified by the Minister ; such an act she must consider as failing in sincerity towards the Crown, and justly to be visited by the exercise of her Constitutional right of dismissing that Minister.

She expects to be kept informed of what passes between him and the Foreign Ministers before important decisions are taken, based upon that intercourse ; to receive the Foreign Dispatches in good time, and to have the drafts for her approval sent to her in sufficient time to make herself acquainted with their contents before they must be sent off. The Queen thinks it best that Lord John Russell should show this letter to Lord Palmerston." [1]

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. II, p. 264.

CHAPTER XVII

GERMAN UNITY

STOCKMAR spent the winter of 1842–43 at Coburg. He returned to London on 2 April 1843. He found the Queen well, the Princess Royal "wonderfully improved and round like a little barrel". The Prince of Wales had "a steady, clear, and cheerful countenance", and, though suffering from his teeth, was "strong on his legs". The Prince Father was well and contented, but looked "pale, fatigued and exhausted".[1] What struck the Baron, more than anything else, was the rapid development of Albert's character. "There is in him", the *Denkwürdigkeiten* record, "a practical talent by means of which he, in a moment seizes, what is really important in any matter, drives his talons into it, like a vulture into its prey, and flies off with it to his nest."[2]

This imagery, while vivid, does not entirely harmonize with the facts. Stockmar, having suffered from indigestion for many years, became more or less attached to his ailment. He fondled it. It was his one and only vanity. He liked to have his friends look upon him as a martyr to it and marvel at the smile with which he bore his cross.

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 392. [2] *Ibid.*

He thus excused himself, as much as possible, from taking any meals with the Royal Family and accentuated his abstention by working, during the dinner-hour, in that private apartment known as the "Baron's study", which was always reserved for him, whether the Court was at Buckingham Palace, Windsor or Osborne.[1]

When circumstances required that Stockmar should dine at the Royal table he was permitted to retire to his study when the Queen left the dining-room. He plunged at once into his work. Albert, when not otherwise detained, joined him, after a short interval, bringing dispatch-boxes filled to the brim with important documents. Dutiful pupil and the painstaking mentor invariably settled themselves on a comfortable sofa, plunged into the papers and passed long and confidential hours together. It was to this retreat that Albert repaired when he had an important problem to solve.[2] And the opinion may be hazarded that if he so promptly grasped the essentials of a problem, it was because he had the discernment to follow the advice of a man who knew how to get at once to the kernel of a difficulty.

If Stockmar's grasp of English governmental problems and constitutional law was exceptional, his knowledge of continental problems was equally intimate. As long as he felt that Victoria and Albert needed his guidance he concentrated primarily on England, When, however, he left London

[1] *Le Baron Stockmar*, par Theodore Juste (Bruxelles: G. Muquart, 1873), p. 40.

[2] *Prussiche Jahrbücher*, anno 1863, p. 337.

for Coburg in April 1847, he was so thoroughly convinced that their talents and characters had matured, that he decided that from then on Germany's interests would receive his special attention. His contemporaneous estimate of the Prince was thus expressed :

He (Albert) " has improved very much lately. He has evidently a decided head for politics, and before his keen eye, even prejudices proceeding from education, or want of experience cannot long maintain themselves. If convincing arguments are placed before him he immediately forms a sensible and equitable opinion, be the matter what it may. . . . His mental activity is constantly on the increase and he gives the greater part of his time to business without complaining. The relations between husband and wife are all one could desire ".[1]

The Baron's reference to Victoria is equally laudatory. He said of her :

" The character of the Queen too has developed most favourably. She gains daily in judgment and experience. The candour, truthfulness, honesty and fairness with which she judges of men and things, are really delightful. The impartial self-knowledge with which she speaks of herself is thoroughly charming." [2]

As early as September 1843 Stockmar had begun to arrange for his gradual abandonment of the guardianship of Victoria and Albert. He had his own children whom he loved and he naturally wanted to see more of them and of his wife. The

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 466. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 467.

prolonged sojourns in England involved the severance of ties that meant a great deal to him. It was for this reason that when asked to make arrangements to return to Windsor in November of that year he fell back upon his indigestion.[1] He considered it essential that the Queen and the Prince should not lean too much upon him. And besides, he deemed it imperative that Peel should see that he was gradually but unmistakably disappearing from the scene.

The condition of continental Europe in the autumn of 1847 gave Stockmar grave concern. He foresaw great revolutions. He wrote, in April of that year, to one of his friends that "I am more and more convinced that we are entering on a great political crisis. Old things are falling, times are changing and a new life will rise from the ruins".[2] But he did not attempt to prophesy what that "new life" would be. On the contrary, he refused to make predictions. His watchwords were that he had little confidence in the then dominant statesmen of the Continent and that the world should be prepared for great mistakes.[3]

The French Revolution of February 1848 was followed by Stockmar with the keenest interest not only on account of the connection which he saw between it and the Spanish marriages but because of the general lessons he drew from it. It was, however, the German movement of 1848

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. I, p. 184.
[2] *Memoirs*, vol. II, p. 207 (note).
[3] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 467.

which went straight to his heart. It was as a Teuton that he observed its various phases. He had, when still quite a young man, classified his views on German affairs under five main heads. They may be thus summarized :

(1) The cause of the political decline of Germany is to be attributed to her disintegration into many different sovereignties which appear to be incapable of forming a compact entity ;

(2) The Dualism of Austria and Prussia would mean injury to Germany and Prussia and even to Austria ;

(3) Austria has never ruled Germany but has used her for non-German purposes ;

(4) Prussia is the logical dominant factor in Germany and

(5) It behoves the smaller States, for the sake of national unity, to submit to making sacrifices.[1]

As the years passed Stockmar became more and more convinced that these general points were well taken. On 20 April 1849 he wrote quite a lengthy letter in which he sketched the historical considerations that had led him to these deductions. From their general tenour it is quite clear that Metternich's name was anathema to him. He accused that statesman of having deliberately contributed to Germany's eclipse. He held that just as Napoleon had divided Germany into three parts, Prussia, Austria and the Rhineland, and had made them subservient to France, Austrian-Metternich policy worked along the same lines, merely substituting Vienna for Paris.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 483.

In elaborating this theory the Baron argued that to carry her point Austria had to acquire complete supremacy. Prussia was the stumbling-block in her way. To thwart Berlin, Metternich did his utmost to uphold the territorial scaffolding of the Rhine Confederation, as the more allies he had against Prussia the easier it was for him to replace Napoleon. As a result of his various machinations he was able to make two of Prussia's kings into mere Austrian puppets. In doing so he furthered the cause of absolutism. This policy played havoc with the democratic aspirations of the German people and thus made Austria primarily responsible for the spread of unrest which swept over Germany in 1848.

When Stockmar saw the storm-clouds gathering in the spring of that year he deeply deplored Prussia's attitude. He had centred his hopes on the Hohenzollerns, even if he had proclaimed that Metternich had made Austrian puppets of them. Stockmar always refused to be a pessimist and he anxiously awaited some sign that Berlin would take the intiative "to unite all the constitutional units of Germany as a Confederate State under the Presidency of the King of Prussia as Emperor" He insisted, however, that in this union there was then no place for Austria but that, at some later date, her German provinces might enter the confederation, though not under an Emperor of Austria.[1]

Whatever hopes Stockmar may then have centred in Prussia were dashed to the ground when on

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 486.

18 March 1848 King Frederick William IV issued a decree which showed distinct anti-democratic tendencies. The people of Prussia met this ukase by swinging the pendulum to the left. They declared on 21 March 1848, in the teeth of this proclamation, that their King would assume the leadership of Germany, that in future Prussia would be merged in Germany and that a General Assembly would be held to deliberate upon the regeneration of the Fatherland. A flag was called into being to symbolize the new *Reich*. Its colours were black, red and gold, the very same ones that the Weimar Convention adopted immediately after the Great War, which were supposed to typify the birth of a new nation and which Hitler discarded as soon as he came into power.

The Baron was too practical a man to take this movement seriously. He argued that if Prussia was too weak to manage her own affairs, she was not fit to lead others. He wrote on 31 March 1848 that "the poor King of Prussia has entirely broken down. He has never yielded or acted except when it was too late and when it would have been better to do nothing. Metternich and the Emperor of Russia were the ruin of him and of Germany." [1] But, whatever doubts Stockmar may have entertained in regard to the feasibility of what was then proposed, he did not refuse election to the National Assembly which was convened "in order to draw up a German constitution between the Governments and the people".[2] He represented Coburg.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 487. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 488.

The Baron reached Frankfort on 12 May 1848 and took his seat in the Diet four days later. Needless to say, he had already elaborated a plan of action. It is set forth in the *Heidelberger Deutsche Zeitung*. Its dominant principle is that the hour for a united Germany has sounded and that the most natural form for this unity would be a single state under a constitutional monarchy, embracing all Germany. His theory was that this Fatherland should consist of what he called immediate and mediate territories. The former, he said, should consist for the moment of the original possessions of the Emperor, the latter, of those hitherto belonging to the Bund.

Stockmar entered into quite a number of details to explain just what he meant, always insisting that Austria was the great stumbling-block to the realization of his proposal. He felt that the Hapsburgs would be reluctant to differentiate between their Germanic and their non-Germanic lands, and, that as these Slav and Italian provinces could have no proper place in a purely German State, an insurmountable difficulty at once arose. He also saw that the Austrian Germans, in contradiction to the dynasty itself, would, no doubt, be averse to accepting his plan through fear that they would be subordinating themselves to Prussians. His only hope—and it was a faint one—was that it might be possible to satisfy them that having to choose between being crippled or being ruined they would prefer the lesser evil.

Stockmar's scheme, which was essentially pro-Prussian in the sense that it contemplated Prussia's

hegemony, also called for considerable self-abnegation on her part. Frankfort was then a free city. He proposed that the Imperial Ministry and the Imperial Parliament should sit there. These circumstances, he foresaw, would, in time, substitute a German mentality for a Prussian one and make Prussia German and not Germany Prussian.

The Baron's reasoning may or not have been sound, but it did not appeal to the Austrians who saw in his plan the death-knell of their particularist aspirations. It did not meet with the approval of the smaller States because their Kings and Princes dreaded the creation of a super Sovereign. Nor were Prussians pleased, because they held that the sacrifices which were expected of them were out of proportion to the advantages offered. Even Victoria was enough of a Coburg to be up in arms against his suggestion.

One of the secrets of Stockmar's success in dealing with the resolute Queen and her devoted Consort had been that he invariably prepared the ground before springing a proposal on them. His practice was to set about matters so adroitly that he converted them to his way of thinking without specifically mentioning the suggestion he had in mind. Thus it often happened that they brought out plans as their own which were really his handiwork. In this instance, however, he was dealing with a German problem, and he omitted to inoculate them with his ideas and to convince them that they were theirs. It was for this reason that Victoria wrote her " dearest uncle ", the Coburg of Coburgs, on 29 August 1848 that :

"Stockmar, I do not quite understand, and I cannot believe that he *really wishes to ruin* all the smaller States, though his principal object is that unity which I fear he will not obtain." [1]

The Crown Prince of Prussia was not then the Queen's son-in-law. She did not know that before her Diamond Jubilee her grandson, William of Hohenzollern, would give evidence of a megalomania that would fill students of foreign affairs with grave concern. She could not have foreseen that before the end of her reign he would send to the President of the Transvaal Republic an open telegram of congratulations because, "without appealing to the help of friendly powers", an attack upon the sovereignty of that State had been repulsed. She, nevertheless, went on to say in this same letter to Leopold that:

"I do not either at all agree in his (Stockmar's) wish that Prussia should take the lead; his love for Prussia is to me incomprehensible, for it is the country of all others which the *rest* of Germany dislikes. Stockmar cannot be my good old friend if he has such notions of injustice as I hear attributed to him. But whatever they may be, I do *not* believe the *Ausführung* to be possible." [2]

This was typically a woman's letter. It bespeaks the sincerity of the feminine soul which admits of no compromise, to which everything is either white or black, which knows of no grey and which is ever prone to apply, often in matters of no moment, the Biblical maxim that "he who is not for me is against me".

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. II, p. 192. [2] *Ibid.*

When Victoria was betrothed to Albert and still under Melbourne's sway, she wrote to her loved one, with contagious exuberance :

" Stockmar is here ; I saw him yesterday and to-day. . . . I am very happy to see him again, and to have him here ; he can give such good advice to both of us, and he understands England so fully. " Stocky " (as I always used to call him) is so sensible about everything and is *so* much attached to you." [1]

It was on 11 January 1840, just thirty days before she became a bride, that the Queen thus spoke so endearingly of Stockmar who had been " Stocky " to her when she was a child. She vaunted his thorough understanding of England and gave her assurance that he is " so sensible about everything ". The ties of friendship that bound her to him had grown stronger and stronger during the intervening years. It was he who had brought her closer to Albert by devising ways and means for having Lehzen retire to Hanover. And yet she was so thoroughly a Coburg, although England's Sovereign, and so essentially a woman, although the greatest monarch in the world, that simply and solely because she refused to see eye to eye with him about his plan for the creation of German unity she wrote of him in a tone that savoured almost of hatred.

It was not merely partisanship that led Victoria to go to such extremes in so strongly censuring Stockmar's plan, as inherently defective and a sacrifice of provincial self-government to exaggerated centralization. Perhaps, the modicum of

[1] *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 211.

English blood in her veins rebelled against the spirit of *Deutschland über Alles* which the Baron thus expressed in a letter to Prussia's Minister to London: "homogeneous elements, animated by enthusiasm, determination, courage and power need not fear the world, and can stand up against what even England, Russia or France may say".[1]

Stockmar sought to persuade the King of Prussia to approve his plan. He wrote to Albert about it, but his letter failed to carry conviction. This was not only because the necessary preparatory spadework had been neglected, but also because, as early as 11 April 1848, the Prince had already sent the Baron a scheme of his own for the creation of modern Germany. When it was submitted Victoria and Albert were already

> Two souls with but a single thought,
> Two hearts that beat as one.

What the Prince wrote represented the views of the Queen as well as his own. He would never have taken the stand he did without being in complete agreement with her. It is therefore obvious that it was as Victoria's mouthpiece, that Albert wrote to Stockmar that: "You cannot imagine how my fingers itch at being separated perforce from Germany at this moment. . . . I am curious to hear what you will say to my project. The King of Prussia, in writing to me, called it 'ideally good'. He wishes some alterations which are of no moment, but which seem to my mind to destroy the harmony of the plan."[2]

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 499.
[2] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. II, p. 58.

It was the reflex action from this "itch at being separated perforce from Germany at this moment" that had caused Victoria to write that letter to Leopold which has already been quoted. It was not only because she was a self-willed woman that she was so angry with Stockmar. It was also because she had already taken her stand and had made it known to the King of Prussia—perhaps without Palmerston being aware of it—that she so strongly resented the Baron's attitude. She may have felt that his opposition would encourage Frederick William IV to adhere to his criticisms of her project.

The Queen had ample grounds for taking for granted that Stockmar had done his utmost to defeat the scheme which she and the Prince had elaborated for Germany. The Baron did not reply to Albert's communication until 24 May 1848. He enclosed a copy of his plan for the reconstruction of Germany.[1] He had already written the King of Prussia on 17 May 1848 a somewhat lengthy note submitting and defending his proposal.

However greatly Stockmar may have been interested in the work of the Diet, he was unable to make his influence felt. The main business of that body was to assist at its own obsequies. It was too effete to accomplish anything. Its members were sextons who had the macabre honour of digging their own graves. The Baron, however, did not even have that morbid satisfaction, because his mandate, as the representative of Coburg, did not give him a vote.

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 491.

After having had the disagreeable experience of seeing how incapable his fellow countrymen were of agreeing upon a constructive programme, Stockmar was sounded in regard to taking over the portfolio of the Imperial Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In commenting on his refusal to accept the post he remarked that "anyone, who, at sixty years of age, with gout in the stomach, undertook the place of sick-nurse to Germania in her infectious fever, must be simply mad".[1]

If Stockmar was unable to convince the Diet that his project should be adopted, he appears to have accomplished the almost equally difficult task of having Victoria recant and applaud it. Unfortunately, it is not clear how he did this. There is no bond that binds men and women together more strongly than hatred of the same person. It may be that the burning contempt which both the Queen and the Baron felt for the inability of the Germans to forget their petty differences rekindled the affection which Victoria had always felt for him. At all events, she wrote her "beloved uncle" on 3 December 1850:

"The state of Germany is indeed a very anxious one. It is a mistake to think the *supremacy of Prussia is what is wished for*. . . . Prussia is the *only large* and powerful *really* German Power there is, and therefore she must take the lead; but her constant vacillation—one day doing one thing and one day another—has caused her to be entirely distrusted. You are quite right in saying things should be done *d'un commun accord*, and I think the

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 522.

other great Powers ought to be consulted. Unfortunately, *Lord Palmerston* has contrived to make us *so hated* by all parties abroad, that we have lost our position and our influence." [1]

And, as if she desired to bring out that the Baron was completely re-established in her good graces, " the ever devoted niece " ended her letter by saying that " good Stockmar is well and always of the *greatest* comfort and use to us. His judgment is so sound, so unbiased and so dispassionate." [2]

Victoria wrote on 28 August 1848 : " I do not either at all agree in his (Stockmar's) wish that Prussia should take the lead ; his love for Prussia is to me incomprehensible," [3] and forgetting this, proclaimed on 3 December 1848 that " Prussia is the *only large* and powerful *really* German Power there is, and therefore she must take the lead ".[4] It is tantalising that we do not know just how the Baron persuaded her to perform such a perfect feat of mental acrobacy, and that there is no way of telling what reasoning she invoked to prove she had not changed her mind.

[1] *Letters*, First Series, vol. II, p. 278.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 279. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 192. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 278.

CHAPTER XVIII

ENGLISH "MEDIOCRITY"

IT should not be forgotten that if stubbornness was one of Victoria's characteristics, common-sense was one of her attributes. If it had not been for her tenacity of purpose, it is probable that England would have assumed a position during the American Civil War of 1861—1865 which might have engendered irreparably bad relations between Great Britain and the victorious North. The world owes, in a large measure, to her obstinacy those fundamentally healthy relations between the two great branches of the English-speaking nations which now constitute the underlying hope for the future of Occidental civilization.

It was to the Queen's common-sense that Stockmar addressed the arguments that won her over to his way of thinking about German unity. He made no attempt to convince, much less to persuade her. What he did was to recall the lesson of Holy Writ that "a continual dropping in a rainy day and a contentious woman are alike". Leaving Victoria severely alone he concentrated his attention on defining his position, satisfied that in time, and if not prodded, she—and Albert—would come round to his point of view. He never overlooked the wisdom of Butler's lines that

"He that complies against his will
Is of his own opinion still",

and did nothing that the Royal couple might be able to construe as an attempt to win them over to his project.

Knowing that Victoria and Albert had hearts that beat in unison with German aspirations, Stockmar began by asking this perfectly intelligible question: "Can it be expected that the English, who are avowedly a nation of shopkeepers, friends of lawful freedom and whose politics are in the hands of practical, moderate politicians, should be enthusiastic about the state of things in Germany and about the German struggle for unity?" [1]

It was on 17 January 1849 that the Baron formulated this question. It obviously came to the attention of the Queen and the Prince because it appeared, in substance, in an article by Stockmar which was published on that date in the *Deutsche Zeitung*. Stockmar knew, when he thus presented the issue, (1) that Albert had written him on 11 April 1848 that "you cannot imagine how my fingers itch at being separated from Germany at this moment", and (2) that on 28 August 1848 Victoria had betrayed, by her letter to Leopold, that she was angry with the Baron over his plan for the reconstruction of Germany.

It thus became part of Stockmar's strategy to let Victoria and Albert feel, without telling them so, that while their attitude was just what would be expected of Englishmen, it was not the line of conduct which would normally be that of German

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 563.

sympathizers. Those were the days when the Queen and the Prince, almost automatically, saw every issue from an angle opposed to that of Palmerston. When the Baron stressed what the English man-in-the-street thought of German unity, this was but a deft way of letting the Royal couple understand what the hated Foreign Minister felt about the matter. The *Deutsche Zeitung* article, therefore, answered its own question by saying:

"How could sober John Bull have confidence in German unity, how could he believe in it, or feel any enthusiasm for it? . . . John Bull, as you know, is a strong, stout man, who has no mean opinion of himself. He suddenly hears that the thirty-eight German Michaels, who are mostly so thin and small that he could easily put them into his pocket, are preparing to form together one strong and stout Michael. That sets his back up. He requires some time to accustom himself to the idea that these little ones may become something. Such has always been the way with strong, stout and somewhat haughty people." [1]

At the moment this article was giving Victoria and Albert food for thought, Stockmar was expressing the strongest disapproval of Palmerston's Foreign Policy. It was on 1 February 1849 and again on 7 March that he wrote disparagingly of Palmerston. In the first of these two letters the Baron said: "however justifiable his (Palmerston's) policy may be *in abstracto*, he is altogether wrong *in concreto*, for his anticipations have not been fulfilled and the results have, therefore, been *nil* in all quarters".[2]

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 564. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 576.

In his second note Stockmar substituted sarcasm for Latin. Writing of Palmerston's policy :

" His hobby is Constitutional Government everywhere. . . . Recent events have strengthened him in this predilection. He (Palmerston) recently said to me : ' A Republic is a bad form of government ; Constitutional Monarchy is better ; but even then so much depends on who rules.' . . . To this maxim he adds another. It is this : ' Social revolutions are possible only when the political edifice is in a state of total decay.' According to his views, the authors of social revolutions are those governments which refuse to take steps in time to put their decayed houses in order." [1]

We fail to see anything wrong with Palmerston's maxims as explained by Stockmar. But Victoria and Albert were then in such a frame of mind that when their Foreign Minister saw white they saw black. In the Queen's letter to Leopold, in which she said that " Lord Palmerston has contrived to make us *so hated* by all parties that we have lost our position and our influence ", she added " what a noble position we *might* have had, and how wantonly has it been thrown away ".[2]

Royalties are inclined to reason in terms of prestige and because Victoria felt at that time that Palmerston had lowered England's standing among nations, all that Stockmar then had to do to gain her backing was to show what the Foreign Minister thought of a proposal.

The Baron was too circumspect to be indiscriminate in his criticism of the English Foreign

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 579. [2] *Letters*, First Series, vol. II, p. 279.

Minister. On the contrary, he pointed out that Palmerston, both at home and abroad, is condemned not only where he is at fault but also in matters where he is blameless. Albert may perhaps have agreed with this view, without daring to express his approval of it. But Victoria was too feminine in her animosities to draw any such distinction. She agreed unreservedly, however, with Stockmar's statement that Palmerston's mistakes arose from holding that because certain things are possible, attainable and desirable in England, they must be the same elsewhere.[1]

Stockmar's own words show just what he meant when he said that the foreign policy of England seems to suffer from ignorance of the real state of things. He boiled down his criticism to the maxim that there was too much living from hand to mouth, not so much laying down a principle and keeping to it, as dealing with the difficulties of the day according to convenience and mere expediency".[2] And then, passing to a concrete issue he added:

"The political friendship now existing between England and France is really a hollow one. France now holds to England as a case of necessity, by compulsion, and therefore with secret repugnance. . . . It is but natural that Russia and Austria should do all they can to disturb the understanding between England and France. The French diplomatists comfort their Russian and Austrian colleagues by saying: 'Don't be uneasy *nous avons bien une politique à nous*.'"[3]

When discussing Palmerston's foreign policy,

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 580. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 587. [3] *Ibid.*

Stockmar may or may not have been trying to kill two birds with one stone, but the fact stands out that before the close of 1849 he had the great joy of seeing Victoria and Albert come round to his views about Germany. The Prince was then criticised, in certain quarters, for holding to the opinion that Austrian hegemony in German affairs was an impossibility. The Baron came to his pupil's defence with his usual ardour.

The swing of the political pendulum soon concentrated Stockmar's attention upon Belgium. He considered that the neutrality of that country was menaced by the spirit of unrest dominant in France. Convinced that Leopold and the Belgians had demonstrated that they knew how to govern, he held that it was in the interests not only of Belgium but of Europe that the autonomy of that country should be supported by the largest possible military force. It almost seems that his prophetic instinct saw visions of 1914 in the distance, for he insisted that no European power would think of tamperng with the neutrality of a State which could join one or the other of the contending forces with 100,000 men.[1]

If Stockmar thus counselled that an armed Belgium was necessary for the preservation of Belgian neutrality, which had become one of the cardinal points of the public policy of Europe, he strongly opposed the calling into being of a Holy Alliance of the Northern Powers. This had been urged, in some quarters, as a counterpoise to the revolutionary tendencies of France. He held that

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 594.

such an alignment might lead to great political errors and to an unjust dictatorship. He remarked that the theory was advanced that radical means are necessary for the protection of States against that disorganization which is threatened by democracy, republicanism and socialism. He answered —he seems to have stolen Palmerston's thunder— "I find that the protection of which States stand in need lies primarily in the application of moral remedies. Coercion can only be applied in harmony with the spirit of the times and when representative of the sense of right of the majority of the nation." [1]

When conditions on the Continent were in a fluid state a German Parliament was convened to meet at Erfurt. It roused lively hopes among those who believed in a union of Germany under Prussian guidance. Coburg sent Stockmar as its deputy. His preliminary survey of the field convinced him that nothing would be accomplished. His analysis of the situation was correct, but notwithstanding his great ability he did not do anything to ameliorate matters.

The truth is that the Baron's very nature and all his antecedents unfitted him for parliamentary life. His political convictions were too strong; he had no sense of party discipline; he had specialized in persuading leaders, not in placating petty politicians. He had passed his life on those higher planes which know nothing of wearisome discussion.

When in Erfurt he did not make a single speech. He saw that he could not carry through his views

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 595.

on the main question, which in his view dominated everything else. All other issues failed to interest him.

Stockmar was not accustomed to speaking in public and had no oratorical ability. In conversation his language was incisive, lively and persuasive. He always knew what he wanted to say and went straight to the point. He paid special attention to his interlocutor and varied his presentation of his subject to meet the needs of the moment. But he had not been trained to think on his feet, as it were, and it was too late for him to learn new tricks at the age of sixty-three.

When Stockmar was brought face to face with the stubborn reality that he could not succeed as a Parliamentarian, the news of Peel's death reached him. He at once sent to the *Deutsche Zeitung* an article in which he referred to the unbroken and sincere friendship that had linked him to the dead statesman since 1819. He laid stress on the fact that his friend's mind and character rested on moral foundations which he had never once seen shaken either in public or private life. And, developing this point, he showed that from them rose that never-failing spirit of fairness, honesty, kindness, moderation and regard for others which Peel showed to all men and under all circumstances.

" On these foundations ", the Baron said, " grew that love of country which pervaded his whole being, which knew of but one object—the true welfare of England, of but one glory and one reward, to have contributed to that welfare. Such love of country admits of but one ambition and

hence the ambition of that man was as pure as his heart. To make every sacrifice for that ambition, which his country demands from all her sons, he considered his most sacred duty, and he made these sacrifices, however difficult they might have been to him." [1]

Peel exemplified in his life those essentials of the education of an English gentleman which spell caste but which create men who know how to control their own emotions and how to govern an Empire. It was because Stockmar, even if he was a failure as a German deputy, understood the soul of an Englishman that he was able to paint so accurate a picture of the Tory statesman whom he revered. No better evidence can be given of his absolute mastery of the psychology of the English than the various details of his tribute to Peel.

Most foreigners—including both Americans and Colonials—are inclined to jump to the conclusion that Englishmen, as a class, are stupid because they are often not exuberant, do not invariably give outward evidence of having comprehended what they have understood, and because they frequently prefer aloofness to cordiality. Stockmar went to the crux of this ridiculous idea, born of jealousy and begotten of ignorance, when he wrote :

" I have been told, or I have read it somewhere, that Peel was the most successful type of political mediocrity. In accepting this estimate of my departed friend as perfectly true, I ask Heaven to relieve all Ministers, within and without Europe,

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 617.

of their superiority and to endow them with Peel's mediocrity. I ask this for the welfare of all nations and in the firm conviction that ninety-nine hundredths of the higher political affairs can be properly and successfully conducted by such Ministers only as possess Peel's mediocrity, although I am willing to admit that the remaining hundredth may, through the power and boldness of a true genius, be brought to a happy, or, it may be, to a particularly unhappy issue." [1]

Writing to-day at an epoch in world history when the challenge of Communism is something that must be faced, it may not be out of place to quote from a letter which Peel wrote to Stockmar. It has about it that ring of prescience which explains why English "mediocrities" have ruled the world for so many decades:

"A victory of communistic theories over the institutions of property, I consider as altogether impossible; if, however, contrary to my expectations, it should appear that one or the other nations wishes to be governed according to communistic principles, the only thing we can do is not to envy it."[2]

If the Baron thus expressed in 1850 such admiration for English statesmanship, when the Whig Ministry, led by Lord John Russell, fell in February 1851 he complained of the bad behaviour of the House of Commons "in which a party had determined on treating the Prime Minister like a servant whom one would like to discharge".[3]

Stockmar objected to the growing omnipotence

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 619. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 621. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 633.

of the Commons and their interference with the attributes of the executive. He deprecated the scarcity of able English statesmen.[1] He held that the only check upon the encroachments of the Lower House could be found not in an able Prime Minister but in a series of able Premiers. He was a stout advocate of Constitutional Monarchy and opposed to a republican form of government. He feared that the line of demarcation between the two systems was not clearly recognized. He held that as Constitutional Monarchy was the basic principle of existing English institutions, it should be defended most resolutely. He argued that it behoved the Prime Minister to say to the House of Commons :

"You have a Constitution which the majority of the people wishes to see preserved. I shall not permit a minority to use the omnipotence to which this body aspires, in order to cheat the majority of the nation and make a mockery of its rights."[2]

Summing up his argument on this score the Baron proclaimed that England does not want a Republic and that Constitutional Monarchy is more popular than ever. "But", and we shall let him speak for himself, "it is with Parliament as with a regiment. It is nothing and can do nothing without an able general. As the Ministers, so the Parliament. Our House of Commons is not what it ought to be because the Ministers are not able leaders. This English mania of making all political wisdom consist in the art of satisfying

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 635. [2] *Ibid.*

Parliament, and of tricking it by means of clever speeches makes me sick." [1]

It is well to remember that when Stockmar drew up this indictment of the mother of Parliaments he was discontented with his own failure at Erfurt. His strictures upon the House of Commons need to be taken with a grain of salt. But whether we agree or not with his criticism of an omnipotent House of Commons, we cannot but admire the clearness of vision with which, in December 1851, he foretold the eventual failure of Louis Napoleon, who was then about to become Napoleon III. He gave several concrete reasons for his prophecy. They place special emphasis on the difficulty of satisfying the expectations of the army and the masses, and on the certain revival of a wish for popular liberties and constitutional government.[2]

Stockmar looked with disfavour upon Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* of 2 December 1851. So did Victoria and Albert. They, the Queen and the Prince, held that England's policy should be one of "abstinence and neutrality". There is nothing to show that the Baron took any part in tracing this line of conduct. It met with Lord John Russell's approval and a dispatch was sent on 5 December 1851 to Lord Normanby, the British Ambassador in Paris, to the effect that "nothing should be done by Her Majesty's Ambassador which could be interpreted as an interference of any kind in the internal affairs of France".

It appears, however, that when this message was going through the routine channels, Walewski, the

[1] *Ibid.* [2] *Ibid.*, p. 639.

French envoy accredited to London, telegraphed his Foreign Office that he had had a conversation with Palmerston, then Foreign Minister, who had expressed his "entire approval" of the *coup d'état* and his "conviction" that the Prince President could have acted in no other way. Lord Normanby, to whom the Quai d'Orsay communicated this fact, was flabbergasted, finding himself in an equivocal position. He requested London to explain matters.

This state of affairs was repugnant to everything the Queen and the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, held sacred. They asked Palmerston to throw light upon the subject. He did not answer at once. On the contrary, without informing either his Sovereign or his Chief he sent a dispatch to Lord Normanby defending the views expressed in his conversation with Walewski and maintaining that they harmonized with the instructions of 6 December 1851. This stand increased the tension and, in due course, Palmerston was dismissed and replaced by Lord Granville.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CLIMAX

PALMERSTON'S dismissal caused a sensation. The general opinion was that he had been the victim of continental intrigue and that he had been sacrificed because he was a Liberal. Court circles were accused of having manœuvred to get him out of the way. It was charged, more or less openly, that the Prince Consort was the product of reactionary German environment and that he had played a dominant part in the plot.[1] This fire blazed up at first and then simmered, but when in November 1853 the catastrophe of Sinope made England furiously anti-Russian, the press cried out:

"Treason! Court intrigues! The Prince Consort and the King of the Belgians are Palmerston's enemies and are for Russia! Palmerston was shelved because he opposed Russia! Stockmar, the cunning friend of Russia, is inspiring the Prince Consort to support Russia."[2]

The strange thing is not that the Baron was attacked in this way by Palmerston's friends, but that a man who had for so many years played such a prominent part in the public life of England was not continuously a target for criticism. It is

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 646. [2] *Ibid.*

all very well to say that he kept in the background. He did. But however discreet he may have been, no amount of prudence could wipe out the fact that for more than a decade he had been known by scores, if not by hundreds, to be one of the confidential advisers of the Queen.

Not only did Stockmar not pay the slightest attention to these attacks, but at a time when many men would still have been smarting under the abuse to which he was subjected, he let his friends know that he thought Palmerston had been in right in the incident that had resulted in his dismissal. He wrote in October 1854 that Pam's attitude had been brought about (1) by a conviction that an alliance between England and France could hold Europe in check, (2) by withering contempt of the Orleans dynasty and (3) by the belief that by gaining Napoleon's friendship he would make it easier to hold in check the Russian menace.[1]

By this time Stockmar's visits to England had become of shorter duration. He paid his last visit to Victoria's Court in 1856, returning to Germany in the spring of 1857. Weighed down by the complaints of old age and far removed from the orbit of politics, he followed the course of events from the sidelines, his comments becoming more and more confined to generalities. Before bidding good-bye to the scenes where he had played such an important and honourable part he wrote to the King of the Belgians :

" In the spring of 1837, now twenty years ago,

[1] *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 645

I returned to England to give what help I could to the Princess Victoria, now Queen. This year I shall be seventy, and I am no longer equal, mentally or physically, to perform the laborious and exhausting office of a paternal friend and trusted confessor. I must say good-bye and this time for ever. This is but the course of nature. And it is well for me that I can do so with the clearest conscience and for a purpose no one can impugn. The consciousness of this is my reward : It is the only one which I desired to earn." [1]

If Stockmar felt that when he had reached the allotted three score and ten the time had come for him to avoid the fogs of London and to abandon the self-imposed cares of his high office, he was unable to throw off the mantle of " paternal friend and trusted confessor " to England's Royal Family. A few days after he had left for the Continent the Prince wrote to him and their correspondence continued until Albert's death brought it to an end.

The closeness of Stockmar's relations with Victoria and Albert finds a touching illustration in the fact that when the Princess Royal, who had married Prince Frederick William of Prussia, was about to become a mother in 1859 the Queen and the Prince desired that he should be in Berlin to be to their daughter and her husband " the same wise and invaluable friend which he had been to them in similar circumstances ".[2] He complied with this request, but was unexpectedly called away from there several weeks before the heir to Prussia's

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 44. [2] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. IV, p. 322.

Crown was expected. One of his then frequent attacks of illness made it impossible for him to return. The result was that the baby boy, who subsequently became Emperor William II of Germany, was born when the Baron was absent.

It is now generally admitted that faulty obstetrics contributed to giving the former War Lord of Europe the atrophied arm which reacted on his mentality and which helped to create that inferiority complex which constrained William II to rattle his sword so much that he finally rattled himself off his throne. Stockmar would obviously have taken no hand in the delivery. But it may not be too fantastic to suggest that, if he had been present, his sage counsel might have prevented the fatal bungling which made of William II a cripple.

Shortly before the Queen and the Prince became grandparents, when barely forty, Albert wrote Stockmar that England was in the middle of a Ministerial crisis and " of a bad state of matters in politics ".[1] But knowing that the Baron was not well enough to come to England no attempt was made to induce him to take a hand in adjusting the difficulty. On the contrary, the Prince confined himself to saying that " here you have material for reflection, which I can " only fling to you in haste in this fragmentary manner ".[2]

Stockmar recovered from the attack which then immobilised him and when the Prince saw him in Coburg, not long afterwards, he looked extremely

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. IV, p. 191. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 193.

well, walked briskly, and spoke with cheerfulness and vigour.[1] About a year later, September 1859, his old ailment and the march of time reasserted themselves. He wrote Albert that "increasing weakness is wearing away my already so greatly infeebled powers" and that he looked forward to death as a relief. He gave expression to this longing in this somewhat involved, but quite German manner: "I hope soon to be able to hunt with Landjagermeister Wangenheim in those fields to which, as I have just heard, he preceded me two days ago."[2]

The Prince wrote on 5 November 1859 that he too had had a "gastric attack" for two weeks which kept him in bed for two days.[3]

Not long after the receipt of this disquieting information Victoria and Albert again visited Coburg. The Prince was slightly injured in a carriage accident. When the Queen heard of it she records that "she went at once to dearest Albert's rooms, and found him lying quietly on Löhlein's (his valet's) bed with lint compress on his nose, mouth and chin and poor old Stockmar (who, I feared would be terribly alarmed) standing by him, also Dr. Baly. He was quite cheerful, and talking and giving an account of this fearful accident and, as it proved, merciful and providential escape."[4]

The next day Stockmar called after breakfast. The Prince had been refreshed by an invigorating sleep, but the Queen observed that the Baron

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 237. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 486. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 501.
[4] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. V, p. 204.

"had been half distracted all night, thinking of what might have happened".[1] Twenty-four hours later Albert was so much better that he was able to go out walking. But Stockmar's fears having subsided he felt the effects of nervous strain through which he had passed.

The 9th of October 1860 brought the Royal visit to Coburg to an end. On Sunday, the 6th of October, the Queen recorded in her *Journal*: "Saw Stockmar for some time, and found him quite himself. It is so delightful to talk to him. He is so kind, so wise. We talked over very many things and he inquired about all his friends."[2]

Two days later as the happy hours spent at Coburg were ending, Victoria made this entry in her *Diary*:

"I sketched the *Festung* from my window, and with some success. Had a visit from dear Stockmar, and talked over many things with him. Towards the end of his stay, dear little William came in and played about the room and we got over the leave-taking without upsetting Stockmar too much."[3] "Dear little William" was then twenty-one months old.

Albert and Stockmar continued to exchange letters when the Royal Family returned to England. The last one written by the Prince was dated, Windsor Castle, 14 November 1861. It contained these significant lines: "I am fearfully in want of a true friend and counsellor and that *you* are the friend and counsellor I want, you will readily understand."[4] The Prince was then in a most

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. V, p. 204. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 208.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 210. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 412.

embarrassing position. The Baron's training had made a statesman of him. He was filled with the gravest forebodings because he considered that the Queen's Ministers were slowly but surely permitting England to drift into war with the United States.

At a time when some ill feeling had been caused at Washington by Great Britain's recognition of the Southern States as belligerents, two emissaries of the Confederacy succeeded in running the blockade and in reaching Cuba where they embarked on the *Trent*, a British mail steamer sailing for England. On her passage home the *Trent* was stopped by the Federal armed vessel the *San Jacinto*, commanded by Captain Wilkes, boarded, and the two Southern envoys arrested on 8 November 1861.

Thackeray has vividly portrayed the righteous indignation which flared up in London when this news was received. The pendulum swung so vigorously that Albert feared that it was going far too far. He argued that two wrongs could not make a right and that because Captain Wilkes's action merited reproof did not mean that the blame should be expressed in provocative language. But Gladstone and Palmerston were generally believed to be ardent champions of the South and Lord John Russell was unable to curb their impetuosity, so the Prince felt that he needed the steadying influence of the Baron's counsel. Stockmar's health made it impossible for him to come to London.

Merely to say that the English people were in-

dignant at the stupid act of the Commander of the *San Jacinto* is understating the national capacity for anger. Preparations for war were instantly made. Eight thousand troops were dispatched to Canada. Naval operations were considered. But at Windsor a sick man, encouraged by the fortitude born of knowledge that another sick man in Coburg would approve of what he did, altered the draft which Cabinet Ministers had proposed to send to Washington.

"*Ich bin so schwach, ich habe kaum die Feder halten können*" ("I am so weak I have scarcely been able to hold my pen"),[1] Albert said to Victoria when he had finished his task. This was the last memorandum he wrote. It bore the imprint of Stockmar's genius because it was Stockmar's training which had made it possible for the last official draft of the Prince to be devoted to the preservation of peace between England and America.

The dying Prince's note shows a knowledge of human psychology worthy of Stockmar at his best. Victoria wrote to her Prime Minister:

"The Queen returns these important Drafts, which upon the whole she approves; but she cannot help feeling that the main Draft—that for communication to the American Government—is somewhat meagre. She would have liked to have seen the expression of a hope, that the American Captain did not act under instructions, or, if he did, that he misapprehended them. . . . Her Majesty's Government are unwilling to believe that the United States Government intended wan-

[1] *Prince Consort*, by Chancellor, p. 275.

tonly to put an insult upon this country . . . and that we are, therefore, glad to believe that, upon a full consideration of the circumstances of the undoubted breach of International Law committed, they would spontaneously offer such redress as alone could satisfy this country, viz., the restoration of the unfortunate passengers and a suitable apology." [1]

This note bore the date of 1 December 1861. Albert died on 14 December 1861. The news was a great shock to Stockmar, who exclaimed: "Here do I see crumble before my eyes that edifice to whose construction I have devoted twenty years of labour, prompted by a desire to accomplish something great and good, but inspired primarily by a sense of duty".[2] But Stockmar himself lingered on. The Queen came to visit him in 1862. As they looked over old photographs together, the Baron burst into tears and exclaimed: "My dear, my good Prince: How I should dearly love to see you again: It will be soon." The final summons came at Coburg on 9 July 1863. The very same day Victoria wrote her "dearest beloved Uncle":

"How deeply will you mourn for our dearest, wisest, *best* and oldest friend, *Stockmar*. Last night I felt sure that the end was near at hand, but the loss is *totally irreparable*! To him *my* Angel looked for advice and support and *his* troubles and anxieties certainly greatly increased after Stockmar left! Again *and again* he longed for Stockmar. . . .

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. V, p. 422.

[2] *Le Baron Stockmar*, par Juste, p. 59.

When one saw him and talked to him, his fairness, wisdom and *wonderful* sense always came out again. And *so* tender and loving.

"Oh! beloved Uncle; *now* that my darling is *no* longer with us, I clung more and more than ever to him and looked to him for advice and assistance in so many, many ways and I can't *at all* REALIZE *what* this will be or *at all believe it.*" [1]

This letter was signed "Ever your devoted and most unhappy niece, V. R." It bore the postscript: "We confided *everything to Stockmar* and he was adored in this house."

* * * * *

However great may be our admiration for Stockmar's purity of motives, however sincere may be our gratitude for all that he did for Victoria in thwarting the conspiracy of the Duchess and Conroy, in helping Melbourne to initiate her in the science of government and in forming Albert's character; however profound may be our admiration for the way in which he counteracted Melbourne's attempt to override the English Constitution when Peel became Prime Minister and for the salutary part he played for two decades in consolidating the heritage of Magna Carta, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that he was a German and that when his influence was at its apex England's Prince Consort, the mirror of the Queen's soul, wrote at a crisis in German history:

[1] *Letters*, Second Series, vol. I, p. 99.

"You cannot imagine how my fingers itch at being separated perforce from Germany at this moment." [1]

The world has moved forward since that day in April 1848 when an English Monarch seemed to be conscious of a dual allegiance. The British democracy did not then stand aghast at such a conception. It accepted with complacency Stockmar's participation in the inner councils of the Royal Family and permitted him, without protest, to become a species of super-Cabinet Minister, admitted to the Holy of Holies. It looked on with indifference when its leaders must have known that no effort was being spared to make a foreigner out of the heir to the Throne and to imprint upon him and his brothers and sisters a German mentality under an English label.

Stockmar, whatever may have been his merits and his purity of motives, typified a system which is repugnant to the spirit of the England of the twentieth century. Had he a successor to-day there would now be no British Commonwealth of Nations and the prestige of the Anglo-Saxon would not be anything like what it is at present. Britons living beyond the seas are so jealous of the principle of self-government that they make no attempt to say who shall preside at Buckingham Palace. But they are determined that their loyalty shall not go out to anyone who thinks as a foreigner or who could write a letter attuned to the note of dual nationality. Were Canadians, Australians or South Africans to doubt for an instant that their Mon-

[1] *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. II, p. 58.

arch was English and nothing but English, they would instantly withdraw their allegiance to the Crown and dissolve automatically what is now, with the United States, the sheet anchor of Occidental civilization.

Stockmar, with all his prescience, built better than he knew. He impressed his personality on Victoria, moulded Albert to his own image and persuaded Melbourne and Peel and their colleagues, whether Whig or Tory, to accept his precepts. But he encountered an insurmountable obstacle in the innocent simplicity of youth.

Sovereigns and statesmen paid the Baron homage and obeyed his behests. The child whose mother, the great Queen, called a "stupid boy" and whom, with "the hereditary and unfailing antipathy" of Monarchs to their heirs apparent, she did "not much like",[1] positively refused to become putty in his hands and, with an inborn dislike of German thoroughness, began, when still in the nursery, to give proof of that independence of character which Stockmar could not override and which subsequently made of Edward VII a great English King.

Victoria and Albert, true to their innate principles and acting in accordance with Stockmar's views, saw to it that from babyhood the speech of their children should be bi-lingual. German, as well as English, was habitual in the royal nursery. The Prince of Wales at first took more kindly to German than to English and he never quite lost traces of a German accent. "His

[1] Greville, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 455.

defect is the burr in pronouncing 'r'," [1] wrote one who knew him. But Stockmar's only other enduring effect on the child's mind was to instil in it an enduring hatred for many things which the exacting taskmaster held dearest.

The spirit of opposition latent in human nature having caused Albert Edward to dislike everything that he associated with Stockmar, the net result of all that the Baron did for England, as reflected in the succeeding generation, was to transmit the crown to a Prince who was, in many ways, the antipodes of all that Victoria and Albert had become under his leadership. But this King was thoroughly English, fundamentally Liberal.

It was because Edward VII, notwithstanding his accent, refused to be a foreigner and knew how to make himself beloved for virtues which Stockmar considered faults that the democracy of England found in him a Sovereign to its liking and that Britons from beyond the seas saw in him a King to whom they cheerfully gave their loyalty. His son has been worthy of such a father and by an irreproachable discharge of great responsibilities has strengthened these bonds of affection.

Stockmar has long since been forgotten by the general public. He was too brilliant, too good and too active a man to merit oblivion. It is, nevertheless, a strange commentary upon the irony of fate that he should owe his enduring place in history to the circumstance that his greatest failure was his greatest achievement.

[1] *King Edward VII*, vol. I, p. 17.

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